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THINGS OLD AND NEW

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THINGS OLD AND NEW

SERMONS AND PAPERS

BY

THE REV. G. H. FOWLER

LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE LEEDS CLERGY SCHOOL

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE REV. E. S. TALBOT, D.D.

VICAR OF LEEDS

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P R E F A C E.

THIS little volume of sermons and papers is of the nature of a testimony. Its value lies not in any conspicuous learning or originality, but in this, that its author had a witness of profound personal conviction to give, and that this witness touches matters of the deepest present concern. Earnest men are divided against each other—some of us are divided in our own hearts—between hope and fear in respect of those currents of critical and scientific thought which tend to remould our conception of the relation between God's special and general dealings, between Revelation and Nature, between Inspiration and its instruments. Men ask themselves what will be the effect, if those thoughts prevail, upon the permanence of Christian beliefs and of that spiritual life which is rooted in them; and it is prophesied in triumph or grief that the one will be destructive of the other.

The answer to such questions cannot be merely intellectual. The voices of spiritual experience must be allowed a hearing. One such voice is to be heard, for what it is worth, in this volume. George Fowler knew that, whatever might be the case with others, the "new" thoughts had been to him the illumination

of religious truth, the deliverance from many difficulties, the opening of vistas of hopeful prospect. He knew that through them the "old" truths of the Church's faith had burnt, for him, with fresh life and meaning. He believed that there were many for whom like experience might have like beneficent result. Accordingly, in season and out of season, with the insistence of personal conviction, with the eagerness of new-made acquisition, he drove this home. Open his writing where we will, and this is what it shows, not the delight of a student in the glitter of a new theory, but the joy of an earnest and reverent spirit in seeing eternal truths allowed more full and unencumbered opportunity for making their appeal to man. Such a position may, of course, be criticized as transitional, and ultimately untenable. But before it is criticized it must be realized, not as a paper compromise, but as the burning conviction of living men. Such a one at least was Fowler. A friend remembers saying to him one day something to the effect that, whatever the duty of following what seemed the truth, one could not but look back wistfully to the old naïve, literal way of taking everything in Scripture, and how his face lit up with an eagerness just tinged with affectionate pity, as he witnessed that to himself, on the contrary, the new interpretations had been the means of bringing light, and warmth, and life, into what had before seemed so largely shadowy, distant, and unreal.

To preserve and crystallize this witness, so far as this can be done for what is so essentially personal

in its character, is perhaps the chief value of this volume.

For his friends, indeed, at Leeds and elsewhere, it will be welcome and dear as preserving words which, in the delivery, stirred them much. And to say that one tone pervades it is not to deny that it touches a variety of subjects, and touches each with freshness, warmth, and point. But I have attempted to indicate in the personal witness, as explained above, the distinctive worth of this little book. In this light the book may, it is not too much to hope, do something both to explain and to reassure, by showing that readiness to take the things of God as the best light available shows that they are, and not as we might have expected them to be, is not necessarily either effect or cause of weakness; that if in some it means a chilling of spiritual temperature, and an uneasy sense of dangerous "concession," to others it brings the bracing strength, not of "dead certainty," but of living conviction. We are constantly asked whether it is conceivably possible to take such and such a view on some question of literary or historical criticism, and still to believe in Old Testament revelation, or in inspiration, or even in the Incarnation and authority of our Lord. To some such questions a book like this may give answers which, though not expected or desired by the questioners, may be found in the long run reassuring even to themselves.

I venture to commend these sermons especially to the younger clergy and to laymen. To the former as an example of preaching, really frank and vera-

cious, and yet full of reverent loyalty, and strong by the union of an authoritative creed with the freedom of personal conviction. To laymen it is commended as the work of one who had known a layman's life, and felt a layman's difficulties. Fowler did not take Holy Orders till he was more than thirty years old. Certainly in doing so he was conscious of no loss of independence. Laymen who read him may recognize the freedom of their own thoughts, and become more ready to consider the claims of those beliefs which made him so humble, loving, and strong, which inspired him in life with power and influence over those who knew him, and which (as it is my own privilege to bear witness) sustained him in death. What his loss is to a School of clerical training, and that School the one which, from its position, is in closest touch with the busy life of men, as well as to the great town with whose life he sympathized so warmly, this book will partly show.

E. S. TALBOT.

SCARBOROUGH,

January 16, 1892.

NOTE.—It has seemed best to a friend of the author who is responsible for passing the sermons and papers through the press that they should be printed as nearly as possible as they were preached or read, and left at their author's death. In several cases it has not been found possible to verify quotations. The last sermon of the course on our Lord's Temptations seems to be lost.

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THE RECONCILIATION
OF OPPOSITES.

PREACHED IN LENT, 1889.

I.

FAITH AND REASON.

“We know in part, and we prophesy in part.”—1 COR. xiii. 9.

WHAT! St. Paul, with his deep insight into the things of the eternal world, into the mysteries of the kingdom of God—the apostle who had been caught up into heaven and heard unspeakable words; St. Paul, in his most inspired moments, when his insight is keenest, when his genius takes its highest flight, as in this wonderful chapter, is yet obliged to make the confession that he knows only in part, he prophesies only in part, and frankly admits that even his knowledge is only partial and incomplete! Even *his* preaching is defective; his presentment of truth is imperfect! Even he cannot do justice to this great theme; he cannot give an entirely satisfactory, self-consistent, systematic account of it!

What a startling acknowledgment this would be to some of us if we allowed the full force of it to come home to us, to find an inspired apostle, and that inspired apostle the greatest of them all, perhaps, as an exponent of Christianity, confessing that his knowledge of it is but partial; his

statement of it is imperfect ! What a crushing blow it seems to give to that narrow, bigoted, exclusive religious spirit, which is so intolerant of any other, so sure of its own position, so positive that it knows the whole counsel of God, so certain that anything which it cannot fit into its own little system must be wrong, irreligious, unchristian, godless ! But as it is a rebuke to narrowness and intolerance, so it comes with a message of comfort and encouragement to the more thoughtful, the more large-hearted and open-minded Christians of to-day—to those who have grasped the great principles of Christianity, and are convinced of their divine origin, and are sure that the world wants Christ, and can be regenerated by Christ alone, and yet find so many difficulties that they cannot explain, so many problems they cannot solve, so many apparent contradictions and oppositions in religion. “I cannot quite see my way to believe this.” “I cannot quite understand that.” “I do not know how to answer the other.” It seems to me that the apostle speaks across the centuries straight to the very heart in regard to those doubts and questionings of our age. “Yes,” he says, “even the inspired expositions are not perfect, they leave room for misunderstanding, they do not solve all the problems of life, they do not profess to entirely satisfy the rigorous tests of a limited human logic ; but you need not become agnostic because you cannot bring all things in heaven and earth down to the level of your own intellect, and comprehend them in a logical system ; for the great practical principle of

Christianity is untouched by these doubts, these unanswered questions, and that great practical principle is love." Who can help seeing the profound significance of this confession of imperfect knowledge in the centre of the psalm of love? One thing admits of no question, that love is the rule of life. Logic may fail us, reason may have to stop short and remain unsatisfied ; even prophecy, inspired preaching, may fail to help us or to solve our doubts ; but charity will never fail. Charity adopted as the rule of life, charity allowed to influence all our actions and all our judgments ; the charity which is long-suffering and kind, which is not easily provoked, which hopeth all things and endureth all things—this is the great reconciling element in human life which will guide us through difficulties and contradictions straight to God.

It really does seem as if St. Paul had anticipated the division of Christendom, the oppositions of Christians, when he thus puts love in the very forefront. It really looks as if he had foreseen the troubles which would arise from the very fact that the revelation of Christian truth in the New Testament is, in a sense, partial, incomplete ; as if he had foreseen what has actually taken place : one side of the truth, one aspect of it, seized upon and emphasized by one party as if it were the whole, and set in opposition to another side, another aspect held with equal tenacity by a different party ; and, seeing this, he had pleaded for the supremacy of charity with all the intensity of his nature.

Is not this, my brethren, in effect his message to the Church in every age? Charity is the first law, the supreme law of the Christian life; no zeal for truth, no regard for orthodoxy, no abhorrence of error can even be pleaded in defence of a breach of Christian charity. So I seem to read it.

Directly you have realized how the religion of Christ has been delivered to us, how it has been handed down to us in the New Testament, you see at once the pre-eminent necessity for large-hearted Christian charity. For a very slight knowledge of the Bible will show you that it does not give us a consistent logical system of Christian doctrine. It presents us with different sides or aspects of truth which it does not reconcile. It leaves them balanced one against the other; *e.g.* on one page you find the doctrine of predestination laid down in what seem the most uncompromising terms; on another page the universal, all-embracing love of God; in one part the law that suffering must always follow sin; in another the offer of free forgiveness. In one set of passages you find faith, the one essential characteristic of the Christian religion; in another set, charity and works of charity, the only true tests of a Christian life. Deeper study, profounder thought, will lead us to justify it; for what does the New Testament profess to do? It reveals the character and purpose and will of God to man, as far as he is able to understand; but if it is the revelation of an Infinite Being, it must be partial only; it must present difficulties, it must transcend reason. It gives us

great principles of morality, and not rules for conduct; it gives us a great inspiring motive, in the life and death and resurrection of its Founder.

But human nature does not like this incompleteness; it craves for certainty, for logical precision, for well-rounded systems. My brethren, I believe that a great many of the difficulties and divisions among Christians, a great deal of the discredit and rejection of Christianity among thinking people, is due to this fact; for no system of theology which men can devise, can embrace all sides of the truth so as to be perfectly self-consistent and logical—some essential element, some vital truth is left out or ignored, because it will not fit into the system. So Calvinism, for instance, the most logical, the most ably reasoned of all, perhaps, has had to sacrifice the love of God to the justice of God in order to be consistent. Is not this a crucial instance of the limitation of human reason? God must be justice, God must be love; how can the two be reconciled? Calvinism cuts the knot which it cannot untie, and sacrifices love. The New Testament holds them in balance as both vital to true religion.

My brethren, it is not difficult, with this clue in our hands, to understand why Christians are arrayed in hostile camps, as it were—the truth left out by one is adopted by another, who makes it the centre of another system in direct contradiction to the first; a narrow limited logic which cannot combine them, which will not leave them in balance, decides that if one is right the other must be wrong. If the aspect

of truth which I see most clearly is right, then yours, which seems to me so different, must be wrong. And so, as we think, in the interests of truth, in the cause of orthodoxy, ay, even in loyalty to Christ, we attack, we condemn, we abuse one another in tragic forgetfulness of the golden rule of St. Paul, that charity stands high above knowledge, above faith, above prophecy, and that nothing will justify the sacrifice of charity in the true Christian life. My brethren, I believe it to be the work of this age, an age of widening knowledge and larger views, under the guidance of charity and the Holy Spirit, to reconcile, at least partially, these opposing camps ; to show, at least, that even in religion, there are two sides to every question ; to teach men that two different aspects of truth may be mutually inclusive, instead of exclusive ; to help them to see that the opposite sides of truth which Scripture and reason alike admit to be equally necessary, equally vital, and which Scripture does not and reason cannot combine, may find their point of meeting in a higher unity, when that which is perfect is come, and that which is partial is done away.

Brethren, believing as I do, with all my heart, in the power of God unto salvation, believing that it has a future before it far grander than anything that lies behind it, believing that a deeper knowledge, a larger view, and a more charitable spirit play a great part, under the Providence of God, in bringing about a reconciliation of Christians with Christians, and to advance the kingdom of Christ, I have

ventured to bring this subject before you, though I know it is a very difficult one.

I do not pretend for a moment to be able to reconcile these opposite truths ; I only want to show you that it is possible to hold them together, that it is not unreasonable to believe that those which seem most inconsistent with one another may find a meeting-point higher up.

Let me then, as briefly as possible, try to show that there ought to be no opposition between reason and faith, but rather the most vital union. It is surely a strange thing that they should be found in opposition when the chief characteristic of the Founder of our Faith, according to the translation of one of our greatest critics, is "sweet reasonableness." Why do so many people think that faith and reason are contradictory ? Why do so many of the most thoughtful and intelligent in all classes of society say, in effect, "If I am to become a believer, I can only do so at the cost of ceasing to think. I can only do so by simply sacrificing my reason, shutting my eyes, and believing what I am told" ?

Now, there are many causes of this ; it is partly due to mistake as to what reason really is, and what its limits are, partly to not understanding what faith is.

Now, I am not going to say that this unbelief is not partly due to moral causes, and partly to the fact that the study of nature and nature's laws, the discoveries of science, the wonders of the natural world, the uniformity of natural law, have so absorbed men's minds and attention, that the spiritual world and

its reality has become harder to realize, the intense and concentrated study of the natural has undoubtedly made the spiritual, the unseen, harder to realize.

Mr. Darwin seems to have so absorbed himself in the study of nature, as to have lost the spiritual faculty altogether.¹ But we must not shift the blame entirely on the spirit of the age. Theologians and preachers must bear some of it; we, or our fathers, must be held responsible for misstatements and perversions of Christian truth. However it has come to pass, the fact remains that, in many and many a modern attack upon Christianity, we find that the whole assault is directed against doctrines supposed to form part of the belief of the Church, but which most intelligent Christians would be the first to repudiate.

We must be held responsible, too, for not allowing a sufficient place to reason; we have taught, or we have allowed men to think so, that reason must stop when it had become convinced that a revelation was necessary, and had been made, and then must accept the contents of revelation without question or inquiry. We have presented Christian truth too often as a cut and dried system of doctrines which has to be believed, without trying to show how truly reasonable these doctrines are, how square they are with human life, how closely they correspond to the deepest needs of the human heart, for surely the very inmost principle of revelation is that the mind of God reveals itself to the mind of man; it is the appeal of the Divine mind to the human, on the basis that one is the image

¹ See "Darwin's Life," vol. i. pp. 100, 101.

of the other. Oh, my brethren, I do think we have here one of the most real reasons for the divorce between reason and faith. If the reason of man—and by that I do not mean mere speculation or logic, I mean his whole higher nature, including conscience and feeling as well as judgment—if this reason of man is indeed made in the image of God, then surely the revelation of God in Christ, the unveiling of the mind of God cannot contradict it, cannot conflict with it, cannot be out of harmony with it, *unless* it has been wrongly interpreted. If properly interpreted, it must be on friendly terms with the human reason and the human heart. Do not misunderstand me. Of course I do not say for a moment that the truths of revealed religion do not transcend reason. What I do say is, that they cannot contradict reason, they cannot be in conflict with conscience unless they are misinterpreted. There are limits to reason, but so far as it goes, it goes surely and firmly; it does not claim for itself the ability to comprehend the whole breadth and reach of truth, it does not say “I will not believe what I cannot understand,” because it knows that human reason cannot be commensurate with eternal truth. But it does say, it does claim that the beliefs which it accepts, shall be in the highest and truest sense reasonable, *i.e.* not contradictory to reason, not in conflict with conscience.

My brethren, I will even venture to say that every truth of revelation which is to have any living influence upon my life and conduct must commend itself to my reason, must be assimilated, must form really

a part of my own convictions. I know that we all begin by accepting revelation in authority. We are brought up to believe it; we accept it often without question; but, my brethren, will a conventional, a traditional faith like this be anything but a fair-weather faith? will it ever stand the strain of a real trial? will it ever be an inspiring motive power in your life, unless it takes deeper root in your nature, and becomes part of your own conviction as a reasonable being? You need not be highly educated or learned to possess this reasonable faith; the simple peasant, whose whole nature goes out in response to the revelation of a Father who loves her, a Saviour who has died for her, and a Spirit who is her indwelling friend, does possess such a faith. Hers is a simple creed. She does not know much more, perhaps, but each article of it is grounded in her reason, is a personal conviction, and influences her life.

But, when I say that revelation rests on reason, in the last resort, I do not forget the place of the heart in religion. I know that religion is a matter of the heart quite as much or more than of the head. But this I think I may say, without any fear of being misunderstood, that when any Christian doctrine, any truth of revelation, is embraced by my understanding, and by my conscience as well as by my heart, it will have a more real influence upon my life, it will make me stronger in the time of trial and temptation, it will give me something to rest upon when the hour of darkness comes upon me, and the storm beats against the house of my faith. "I will

pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the understanding also."

But belief, with so many, often means little more than the passive acquiescence in certain propositions which are not accepted by the reason or assimilated by the soul, and have little or no influence upon conduct at all. But though religion rests on reason, though it is eminently reasonable, it must, if it is Divine, go beyond reason; then comes a point at which reason stops and can go no further, and there and then it is that faith steps forward and lights one through the darkness.

And what is faith?

It is certainly not merely an intellectual assent to certain truths—"the devils believe and tremble"—it is not an unquestioning acceptance of the contents of revelation; to some this may be an easy thing, to others it may be the most difficult thing in the world; no one word will exhaust the meaning of faith, and here is the root of the matter, as far as faith and reason are concerned. Is it reasonable for me to trust myself to faith when I can no longer see my way by the light of reason? Let me answer this by an illustration. Am I not exactly in the position of a scientific man, who is on the brink of some great discovery in natural science? Everything points in the direction of it. He has got all his premises, he is morally sure of it, but he wants a crowning experiment before he can prove it. Such is my position with regard to the things of the unseen world. Everything points me to their reality, everything convinces

me of their reasonableness ; but I cannot prove it, I cannot verify it, I cannot demonstrate it **on** this side of the veil. I lack the crowning experiment. As a great modern writer has said, "Faith is unverified reason." And this very fact is what really makes religion possible, for you will see, if you bring it to a point, that religion becomes to every individual a great choice. Look ! I have much to convince me that revelation is true ; but there is much that is uncertain, there is much that I must take on trust. I can, if I like, turn away from the great plain evidences of its truth, and fasten my eyes on the difficulties and obscurities. I can reject it ; I can say it is not proved. It does not compel my acceptance ; it leaves me free to choose.

And here comes in faith as a vital element in religion. What is it ? Surely not merely an intellectual assent to certain propositions which I cannot verify. Christian faith has more than one meaning, but in reconciling it with reason one will be enough—fidelity, faithfulness, loyalty. Fidelity to what ? Surely, to begin with, fidelity to what is truest, highest, best, in my own nature ; fidelity to that voice within which bids me choose what is right and refuse what is wrong. But, if I am faithful to that, it will, it must, lead me to Christ, because I find in Him, and in Him alone, the perfect answer to the question, "What is right, what is good, what is true ?" because I find that unbeliever and believer alike unite in placing His human life, His human character, immeasurably above any that has ever

been lived on this earth. It comes to this point: "What think ye of Christ?" I must make my choice. Shall I accept Him to whom my whole nature, reason, heart, and conscience goes out in willing, eager homage, as my Master? Shall I be faithful to Him, shall I trust Him, and believe His own words, that He is indeed the revelation of God in man, and go forth to my life and my work with all the inspiring power that belief in the Incarnation gives me? Or shall I, because I stumble at miracle, because I cannot understand how God and man can be united in one Person, because I cannot be absolutely certain of the truth of the Gospel narrative, because I cannot believe what I cannot understand, shall I reject Christ as the Light and Life of men, in rejecting Him as the Incarnate God?

Shall I make the wrong choice, shall I be unfaithful to the voice within, unfaithful to what I know is highest and truest and best, because I cannot have certainty, when you come to the bottom of it, and fall back into the dreariness and hopelessness of agnosticism? But if I could have *certainty* there would be an end of religion. Think of the words *dead certainty*; the Christian life would indeed be dead, barren, fruitless, shorn of all its beauty, if we were dead certain, for the flower of the Christian life is its faith, its faithfulness, its trustfulness, its loyalty. My brethren, the centre and core of religion is fidelity to Christ, surrender to Christ, which is surely a reasonable service, for faith and reason find their meeting-point in Him.

II.

LAW AND LIBERTY.

“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”—ST. JAMES ii. 12.

LAW and liberty, predestination and freedom, God's omnipotence and man's free will. Here, my brethren, here we have two truths, opposite truths which no human reason can reconcile, which are beyond the scope of logic, but both of which we recognize as true. Both are essential to religion, yet logically we cannot hold them both together; logically they contradict one another. If God is the great first cause of all things, if God is all-powerful, how can man be free to act as he chooses? And yet, if man is not free, there is an end of religion; nay, there is an end of morality, of moral responsibility. “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.”

In all ages men have felt the difficulty, in all ages there have been those who have been powerfully impressed with the majesty and lawfulness of law and the littleness and insignificance of man. In the old days of paganism men thought of it as fate, resistless, iron, inexorable, supreme over God and men

alike. Again, in some systems of Christian theology, such as Calvinism, as in Mohammedanism, the power of God had so filled men's minds that no room was left for the free will of man ; and God was represented as selecting a favoured few to be the heirs of salvation by an arbitrary act of His will, and dooming all the rest of mankind to eternal misery, although they had no power of their own to choose good and refuse evil, although they really were not morally responsible, because they had no power of choice.

In our own day natural law has taken the place of the fate of paganism and the God of Calvinism. Everything has been, and is being, gradually brought under the reign of law—right and true and good, up to a certain point—and science, in establishing the reign of law, comes at last to man. Is man an exception? Has he really the power of choice which he thinks he has? Is his will really free? The answer of materialistic science to this question is, No. It tells us that our life and character and our every action is determined for us by circumstances over which we have no real control. We think we have the power to choose, but our choice in every case is really the result of a great number of influences, which have gone to make us what we are, a disposition which we have inherited from our fathers and ancestors—hereditary strength or weakness, education, training, association, example ; these are what really determine our conduct in any given case. And if so, to take a typical instance, when I am attracted by the temptation of an immediate, but immoral pleasure,

and deterred from it by the sense of duty or the fear of the consequences of sin, or some higher reason than this, I have no more choice as to the course I shall take than has, say, a piece of iron that is attracted in opposite directions by two magnets, one of which is more powerful than the other. Now I am not going to discuss this subject, it is not really a practical one, I will only ask you to think what the consequences would be if such a theory found general acceptance. Men would of course become mere machines, moral responsibility would cease to have any meaning. It would be as absurd to blame and condemn base and cowardly actions as it would be to praise noble and unselfish deeds, for praise and blame depend entirely upon the power of choice.

Man becomes only a more complicated and highly finished automaton. My brethren, however logical these theories may be, the common sense of mankind has always, and I venture to say, will always, register its protest against them ; an instinct which is stronger than logic, practical experience which is more convincing than science, the countless deeds of heroic self-sacrifice with which history is studded—nay, reason itself, all tell us that, though our freedom may be limited, may be conditioned to some extent by those influences which I have mentioned, we have the power of choice if we like to exert it, we have free will until we wilfully forfeit it. Scripture holds these two truths, God's omnipotence and man's free will, in balance, like two great columns whose union in an arch is beyond the ken of human reason.

Now I do not think I should be wrong in assuming that there are few or none who would deliberately deny that they have the power of choice and therefore are not morally responsible for their actions, and yet there may be many who are unconsciously and practically fatalists; there may be many who are beginning to drift to leeward, to cease to struggle against temptation, and who are excusing themselves by throwing the blame on circumstances—the weakness of their nature, the strength of passion, the influence of their education, associations, companions. But I would fain hope that there are few who have really lost their freedom. And of this I feel sure, that in every large assembly of men there are souls in every stage of development. There are some to whom I would fain think the keeping of the commandments of God is a joy and a delight, who are even now enjoying a foretaste of that glorious liberty of the children of God, to which St. Paul looked forward so longingly; there are others who still feel the chain of sin galling them, are still hampered and hindered by self-indulgence; others who are struggling hard, perhaps, for liberty, with whom the issue is doubtful; others who are yielding to the enslaving power of some vile passion and giving up the battle. I venture to think there is not one person in a thousand who does not wish to be free, not one to whom the life of free and loyal service of God does not present greater attraction than the life of slavery to sin. How can I become really free? How can I keep my

freedom? My brethren, it may sound contradictory, but the way to liberty lies through law, and that is what St. James is thinking of when he speaks of a law of liberty by which we shall be judged.

The truth is that liberty in its highest sense is only won through the means of law, through the discipline of law, through obedience to law, and here it is not so difficult to reconcile law and liberty. At first sight, to speak of a law of liberty seems a contradiction in terms.

Law is connected in our minds with obligation, constraint, coercion, policemen, and prisons.

And liberty, we know what that means—absence of restraint, freedom to go where we like and do what we please without being interfered with by law. How then can there be a law of liberty?

We have many of us, I suppose, been somewhat perplexed by the apparent contradictions of St. Paul in speaking of law: "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" "The strength of sin is the law;" "Where there is no law there is no transgression;" "Without the law sin was dead;" "Ye are not under the law, but under grace;" and yet he acknowledges that the law was given by revelation of God, and that it is holy and just and good.

Now, in order to understand this kind of language of the apostle, let us go back to the very early days of which he speaks, before the law was given, when man had only the dim light of conscience to guide him, and let us try to realize the condition of things by the help of a simple illustration. I imagine a

company of travellers journeying over a vast plain towards a goal which they know lies in a certain direction, but with no road, no land-marks, nothing to guide them, nothing but a faintly marked track, sometimes scarcely distinguishable, along which they must go to reach the journey's end.

Would it be any wonder if many of them, attracted by the various objects on either side of them, strayed off the track and lost their way, and failed to reach the goal? Would so very much blame be attached to them for so doing? But was not that something like the condition of man before the law was given? The image of God, in which he had been made, growing gradually fainter—conscience, his only guide, speaking less and less clearly, no wonder he lost his way and missed the aim of life. Sin, in its original meaning, is simply missing the mark, losing the way.

Then came the law.

Let us picture to ourselves, now, instead of the faintly-marked track, a broad, beaten road, on either side a fence, written directions informing the travellers exactly as to the course they were to follow. Now there would no longer be the same excuse for straying away from the path; for to do so they would have to get over the fence in the very face of the notice-board. Now I think we see what St. Paul means by "Where there is no law there is no transgression," which is the same as saying "When there is no fence, or notice-board, there can be no trespass." Sin is not imputed when there is no law. Straying

away from the path is nothing like so bad as trespassing. Directly, therefore, the path is marked out and the fence set up, when the law is given with its clear directions and plain definitions of what is right and what is wrong, sin becomes something more than merely missing the way, it becomes a transgression, a deliberate violation of what is known to be right and good. So it becomes clear what St. Paul means by "Where there is no law there is no transgression."

And is it not also clear what he means when he says that "The law is the strength of sin ;" or, "The commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death" ? Who that knows anything of human nature, and of the struggle between the lower and the higher, does not recognize the truth of this ? does not know that opposition to the lower nature immediately calls up resistance ? who does not know, too, that this lower nature is always impelling us to do things which are wrong and forbidden just simply because they are forbidden ? Very like the effect of a prohibition upon a child was the effect of the law upon the Israelites. No sooner is it understood than sin becomes by the commandment exceeding sinful, sin stands out in its true light. No sooner is man fenced round with a number of prohibitions—"Thou shalt not do this," "Thou shalt not do that"—than the spirit of opposition in the lower nature, the spirit of false independence, wakes up into new life, and begins to urge him irresistibly to do the thing which he is forbidden to do ; while, at the same time,

his higher nature, his better self, recognizing that the law is spiritual, that the law is good, protests more or less vigorously against the claims of his passions; and then follows the strife and struggle which St. Paul describes so graphically in the seventh chapter of the Romans, which makes men cry out in their despair for some deliverance from their misery, "The good that I would I do not," "O wretched man that I am!" Ah! this cry of St. Paul, this cry is the confession wrung from the heart of man struggling to live by law and failing in the struggle; acknowledging that law is insufficient, that law will not make him good and happy and free; yearning for some deliverer, some motive power, some inspiring force which will do for him what the law cannot do. For law can only restrain and keep under control our lower nature; it can only say to us men, "This you must do, and that you must not do, or you will suffer for it;" it cannot make men rise above a sense of duty, of moral responsibility, it cannot supply any motive power to life. It can make men moral, it can make them just and respectable; but it cannot make them pure in heart, or merciful, or loving, or tender; it cannot make them free. It lays the foundations for a higher life, but it never can produce the higher life itself; its function is merely to keep down the lower, the animal nature, that the higher, the spiritual, may have free play and be glorified.

Now, the mistake of the Jews, the people of the law, may be summed up in one short sentence—they mistook the means for the end. The law was a

means to an end, they made it an end in itself. They made religion to consist in a mere performance of external duties, a mere abstinence from certain definite sins. They did not see that obedience to any number of external rules could only keep the lower nature down by force; it could not change, renew, transform it. They did not see that religion must begin from the heart, must work from within outwards. They did not see that the law was the schoolmaster to lead them to Christ; that Christ was the end of the law. They did not understand that the school of training and discipline and restraint of the natural man was to prepare for the freedom of the spiritual man.

What a lesson this training of Israel under law, this failure of Israel to see what it was meant to prepare them for, has for us! The keynote of the Gospel as contrasted with the Law is found in those words of St. Paul, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." When we have drunk deeply of the Spirit of Christ, when our hearts are burning with love for Him, when to live as He would have us live is the ruling motive of our lives, when it is easier and more natural to do right than it is to do wrong; then we are indeed free, then we have little need of law.

But when the spiritual life is not so strong within us, when faith is feeble and love to Christ is weak, and religion is not the power in our lives that it should be, do we not want the law, do we not want the discipline which the law involves, do we not need

it to make our sense of duty stronger? The less we have of the spirit of Christ, the love of Christ, the zeal of Christ, the less are we fit for the freedom of the gospel of Christ ; and if we would ever be free we must live more by law, more by rule ; we must get the better of our lower passions—and we can only do so by discipline—we must have our rules of life, our stated hours of prayer, whether we are inclined to it or not ; our rules of almsgiving and of self-denial. We must deny ourselves what seem innocent enjoyments, if conscience warns us that danger awaits in the indulgence of them. We must abridge our liberty as Christians—"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." But remember that all this sense of duty which we want to deepen, this self-restraint which we ought to practice, is only a means to an end, it is a help, a great help, to the spiritual life ; it is not the spiritual life itself—moral responsibility, the sense of duty—duty to one's self, to one's neighbour, to God. I cannot rest there, excellent though it is, because there is constraint, there is compulsion, there is obligation about it. The soul of man cannot rest here, it craves for freedom ; the freedom of loyal, loving service, the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. Most of us know, surely, how work done merely from a sense of duty, merely because we are answerable, merely because we are obliged, fails to satisfy, fails to bring peace and happiness to ourselves or to others. I mean if we are content to do it only from the sense of responsibility, and do not long and strive to rise

higher, the duty is done, the service is rendered, the responsibility is discharged. We have done our duty ; but oh, how often it is done grudgingly and of necessity ! how wide the gulf between duty so done and service rendered lovingly ! What a bloom and a beauty, what a brightness and happiness is spread over life when one rises from duty and responsibility to love, from law to liberty !

And, oh, how many Christians are still really under the law as much as the Jews were, and not led by the Spirit ! How many, perhaps, of you, are not really led by the Spirit, but are driven to try to do what is right because you feel obliged and not because you love it ; and you fail because you lack the motive power of life—the love of Jesus Christ, the inspiring presence of His Spirit in your hearts. Surely, this is what being “under the law” means to us Christians. You cannot do what you know you ought to do, and so you either give up trying at last—or, what is more common, you try to compromise matters. You try to satisfy your conscience, as it is called, by doing some duties and not doing others ; by abstaining from some sins and indulging in others ; by keeping the letter and not the spirit of commandments ; perhaps, by not committing the wrong impure act, but allowing yourself to indulge in the wrong impure thought.

Religion of this sort will never bring you any peace or any satisfaction. You are only keeping down the evil by force ; keeping it out of sight and not getting rid of it. Your heart is like a sleeping

volcano, the evil ready to burst forth whenever any strong temptation comes, as it burst forth from the hearts of the Jews and made them crucify the Lord of Glory.

Let me sum up the relation of law and freedom in a simple illustration. Go into a cripples' hospital and see the poor creatures all about you with legs or arms tightly bound up with splints, bandages and irons, cramped and well-nigh useless. We know well enough why their liberty is restrained like this, why they are made so uncomfortable ; it is that the limbs may be brought into the proper position to be healed or straightened, so that the patients may have the free use of them when they leave the hospital. It would be a useless and stupid thing to deprive them of what little use they could make of their limbs unless there was some higher end in view. But in order to attain that higher end, the restraint, the bandages, the irons, etc., are indispensable.

So it is in our religious life, the sense of duty, moral obligations, self-denial, with their constraining and restraining influence are like the bandages, invaluable as means to the higher end of free, loving, loyal service of God. But if we rest there, if we do not try and rise above this, we lose all the brightness and joy and peace of life ; we defeat the whole purpose of God towards us, which is, that we should serve Him with the free obedience of sons, and not with the forced service of slaves. We need to see that law fails in its object, unless it leads us to Christ, unless it ends in the service of Christ.

Yes, in devotion to Jesus Christ that strange expression "the law of liberty" finds its true meaning, for no feeling of responsibility, no sense of duty, no restraint or obligation which law imposes upon me, can bind me to what is right and good, like the sweet constraining love of Jesus Christ. Yes, the liberty which Christ gives you is more constraining than any law. The love of Christ transforms the hard "you must" of law into the glad "I will" of liberty, and so law and liberty are reconciled. When God says in your reason and your conscience "you must," and in your heart you answer "I will," the secret of life is opened, the true life of reconciliation is begun, religion has ceased to be a duty and has become a delight—in the service of Christ there is perfect freedom.

III.

LOVE AND WRATH.

“God is love.”—I ST. JOHN iv. 8.

“Our God is a consuming fire.”—HEBREWS xii. 29.

“GOD is love.” Yet “our God is a consuming fire.” So they come to us, these two voices, two of the last words of revelation, summing up, as it were, in two words that double aspect of revelation, those two sides of the character of God, which meet us all through the Bible from beginning to end, and which seem to some so contradictory, so difficult to reconcile. If God is love, how can He be a consuming fire? And yet of this I feel absolutely sure, that he who wrote those words in the Epistle to the Hebrews would have said Amen with all his heart to that voice of St. John, God is love, and that the apostle of love would himself have seen no contradiction whatever to his own doctrine in the sterner sounding sentence of his brother apostle.

In both Testaments these two sides of God's character are faithfully represented—mercy and judgment, love and wrath, forgiveness and punishment, the inexorable sternness of God, the inexhaustible

tenderness of God. In the Old Testament the sterner side is more prominent, in the New the merciful. In the Old Testament God reveals Himself gradually as, above all things, a righteous, a just, and a holy God, and as, above all things, requiring righteousness, justice, and holiness in His servants and worshippers. He must teach men first the difference between right and wrong. He must make them see and feel that wrong doing, that unrighteousness, is inevitably followed by punishment. He must ingrain deeply into the human conscience the great primal unvarying law, that the violation of any law of God, whether natural or spiritual, will be followed by punishment, by suffering. He must stamp the lesson upon the mind of man that, as sure as any people become degraded and corrupt beyond recovery it will perish ; it will have to give place to another nation, more pure, more moral, and so more vigorous. He must make them see and feel that when they have sinned deeply, transgressed His laws, and become corrupt and vicious, the way to restoration, to salvation, lies through judgment, through suffering, through chastisement. Corruption can only be purged away in the fire of severe and searching discipline. And what is true of national sin and transgression, is also true of individual. The soul that sinneth it must die, is the lesson that the Old Testament sets itself to enforce, which, being interpreted, simply means that all violating of God's law, whether natural or spiritual, will invariably be followed by punishment. My brethren, must not a man have learnt this lesson

before he can go any further in his religious education? When we look at men as they are, when we realize how strong is the lower nature, that the animal in each of us is always ready to assert itself, then we begin to see that, in the earlier stages of man's development, it was absolutely necessary for him to be taught, sternly and rigorously, that, if he indulged his animal passions without restraint, he must suffer for such indulgence. "Keep your lower nature within bounds, if you do not you will suffer." Such is the first lesson of the Old Testament, though not for a moment would I say that it is the last; God forbid. But, in order to enforce this lesson, lawgiver, and prophet, and man of God, must come forward, again and again, with their messages from God, all keyed to this one note: "You have broken God's laws, you have suffered; if you break them again you will suffer worse than you have done, and you will have to go through the fire of judgment, through the furnace of affliction before you can be restored to the favour of God."

1. Surely this is why, in the Old Testament, the sterner side of God's character is most prominent; this is why we hear so much of anger and wrath and indignation; this is why the Law is given at Sinai, with all its awe-inspiring, terror-striking sanctions; this is why the certain punishment of transgression is so sternly emphasized; this is why God is so often represented as pouring all His wrath and indignation upon sinners; this is why the note of judgment rings out so loud and long. And yet, behind

all this, behind all the threatenings, behind the dark cloud of the divine anger against sinners, again and again, all through the Old Testament we catch constant glimpses of the sun of divine love shining brightly.

Again and again do psalmist and prophet, yes, law-giver, too, draw back the veil and show us something of the true heart of God, yearning after His erring children. "My song shall be of mercy and judgment," cries the Psalmist, and it is perhaps his most constant cry. Aye, even from the clouds and darkness of Sinai itself, we hear the name of the Lord proclaimed, the true character of God revealed, as "The Lord, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." And only far away, in the background, as it were, as if reluctant to mar the fair promise of mercy, the voice of law is heard, and that will by no means clear the guilty. And this character gleams out ever and again, clear and bright as in the Gospel itself, from the songs of the psalmist and the visions of the seer. "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "In

a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ?"

So ever through the Old Testament is heard, behind the stern denunciation of judgment upon disobedience and sin, the deep sweet undertone of Divine love, longing for the work of judgment to be done, that it might pour itself out without stint upon the sons of men.

2. But in the New Testament, as we might expect, the veil of which, so to speak, a corner had been raised up here and there, and a glimpse gained of the true character and purpose of God—that veil which had hidden the face of God is now lifted, and the intense, inexhaustible love of God for men is revealed in the words, in the life, in the death of Jesus Christ. You do not need me to remind you how parables, like that of the Prodigal Son, or of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, lay bare the very heart of God. You do not need to be reminded that the life of Christ, from Bethlehem to Calvary, is illuminated by one supreme characteristic—a passion for seeking and saving the lost, a passion which finds its last and most perfect utterance on the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a manifold thing ; it throws a bright light upon many of the problems of life, but it is first and foremost, it is above all, a gospel—good news to man

—it is the proclamation of the eternal unchangeable love of God for man, it is the unveiling of a tenderness, a compassion which persists, and will persist, in seeking after and pleading with the lost, in spite of all ingratitude, resistance, waywardness, and wilfulness, it is keyed to this one note, "I am come to seek and to save that which is lost."

And yet, as you know, behind this, alongside with this revelation of infinite tenderness, this intense love, we hear another voice which sounds so strangely different, a voice so stern, so severe, so scathing in its denunciation, so unsparing in its judgment, that it startles and alarms us. Can it be that from the lips of the Good Shepherd, from the lips of Him Who said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world;" from the lips of Him Who pronounced the sentence of forgiveness on the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more;" of Him Who, out of His agony on the Cross, could utter that sublime prayer of intercession, "Father, forgive them"—can it be from His lips, that the awful judgment is pronounced upon Scribe and Pharisee, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the judgment of Gehenna?" Can He Who turned upon the people crowding after Him, with the stern repelling words, "If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple;" can He be the gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Who utters the gracious

invitation to all, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest" ? Can He Whom we delight to think of as the Good Shepherd, eternally searching for His lost sheep, always so dear to Him, can He be the King Who speaks the awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the fire eternal" ?

Yes, my brethren, such a contrast may well startle and surprise us, may well be a stumbling-block to the careless and superficial ; but, when we come to study it more carefully, we are more than ever convinced of the truth of the Gospel narrative, of the Gospel picture of Christ, for this combination of unsparing severity with unequalled tenderness in the one Person of Jesus Christ, is beyond the power of human skill to imagine or to paint ; and yet, if we had one side without the other, Jesus Christ would not be the revelation of the eternal God—for a God all mercy is a God unjust ; and a God all justice could be no God for frail and sinful men and women.

3. But how difficult it has always been, how difficult it is now, to hold these two sides of the character of God, the tender and the stern, in proper balance. Still more to see that they are not really two, but one ; that the very sternness and severity itself is a proof of the truest tenderness, the purest love.

There has always been a tendency to exaggerate either one side or the other, and so God has been represented as a hard, arbitrary tyrant, yes, even as a jealous, changeful man ; *or*, recoiling from this, men have thought of Him as of a kind and indulgent

father, Whose attitude to moral evil is one of good-nature, indifference, and toleration.

But we know that the character of God is the foundation of all true and enduring religion. And as surely as the character of God has been degraded, as surely as unworthy conceptions of God have been held and taught, so surely has religion lost its hold and its power over thoughtful men and women. Wherever a partial and one-sided interpretation of Holy Scripture has represented God as thinking and acting in a way which falls below the highest standard of human love, then it comes into collision with the deep religious instinct of mankind, and ends at last in alienating it from Christianity. Again and again in the history of Christianity have we Christians incurred the Divine reproach uttered by the Psalmist: "Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself," for we are always bringing God down to our own level. We are always measuring the Divine love by our own, the Divine forgiveness by our own limited forbearance, the Divine patience by our easily exhausted endurance of evil. We represent God as vindictive because it is so human for us to wish to be even with those who have offended us, to pay back our injuries.

"Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself."

It is true that we are made in God's image; it is true that the only conception we can form of God's love is from the analogy of the most perfect human love which we can conceive of. Where we make such a grievous mistake is in measuring His

love by our own, or by that of the average men and women about us. If we would know something of what Divine love, Divine forgiveness is, we must think of a human love such as is painted by St. Paul ; a love which suffers long and is kind ; a love which bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things ; a human love which is never provoked to retaliate, however long it is tried ; a human love which never loses its hope and faith in human nature, however often it is deceived ; a love which cannot rest while there is misery to be relieved, while there are lost to be saved, and wanderers to be brought back ; a love which finds its chief delight in returning good for evil, in feeding its enemy when he is hungry, in giving him drink when he is thirsty ; a love which overcomes opposition and ingratitude by the power of gentleness, forbearance, and tenderness. Such a human love we can conceive of. Nay, something like it has actually been seen ; but such a love will give only a faint conception of the love of God, which indeed passes all knowledge. We have seen it actually embodied and illustrated in the life, in the teaching, in the passion, and in the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

We have seen Jesus winning wandering souls by kindness, converting sinners by gentleness, breaking down opposition by love, and he that has seen Jesus has seen the Father. We are sure, then, that God is love, and what that love means we know from the life and death of Jesus, which we start with as the foundation of our religion. How, then, can this love of God,

this unconquerable, undying love be reconciled with that sterner aspect of Him which the Bible represents? How can the God Who is love be the God Who is described again and again as a God Who takes vengeance upon sinners, Whose wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; as a jealous God, a consuming fire ; a God Who inflicts such terrible punishments on those who disobey Him ?

4. The reconciliation is not so difficult as it seems to be, when we remember that the God of grace is also the God of nature, the God of law. He governs the world by laws which are, as far as we can see, invariable in their action. If we conform to these laws we are well, we are happy, we live ; if we transgress them we suffer, we are miserable, we die. These laws are stern, inexorable, they never show mercy ; but it is God, through them, Who says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Every one who transgresses will surely suffer. It is God, through them, Who says, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that must he also reap."

Now, the threatenings, the judgments of the Old Testament—yes, and of the New Testament too—are simply an emphatic outspoken witness to the certainty with which these laws of God work. Does not all experience confirm them? If health has been wasted, it will not be miraculously restored ; if money has been squandered, there must be suffering from the want of it ; if character has been forfeited by dishonesty or impurity, it may never be

redeemed on this side of the grave. But if this is the case, is it not the truest kindness, truest mercy to give men the clearest and plainest warning? Do not the thunderings of Sinai, do not the threats of Divine vengeance from prophet and law-giver become in this light the warnings of Divine love? Nay, are not suffering and pain themselves loving messages from the God of love? Is not pain really a danger-signal? What would it say if it had a voice? "You have broken a law of God; you are suffering; do not break it again, or you will suffer again worse than you are doing now. You will suffer at last the indignation and wrath, the tribulation and anguish which, St. Paul tells us, cometh upon every soul of man that doeth evil, that persists in doing evil in spite of all warnings of pain and suffering."

5. Cannot we see now how God can be perfect Love, and yet a God Whose wrath burns like fire? Think once again of what the highest, truest, purest human love is. It is *not* the love of a fond indulgent parent who spoils—expressive word—who spoils her child.

True love looks to the highest welfare, the truest interests of those whom it loves; it will not spare pain and suffering if pain is needed for the good of the loved one. True love cannot rest satisfied till the loved one is happy in the truest sense. Well, God is true love; and what is God's purpose, God's will for man? Let St. Paul answer: "He will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." To be saved. What does it mean? Saved from the consequences of our sin, saved from the penalty? But

"Whatsoever a man soweth that must he also reap." Ah, no ; salvation does *not* merely mean safety. "He shall save His people from their sins," stands written on the forefront of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; it does not say "from the consequences." Sin is the real evil ; it is from sin that God would have us saved, from its tyranny, from its bondage. Sin is the disease of the soul ; sin is the disturbing element in our lives. Sin weakens, impairs, disorders, and corrupts our spiritual faculties, just as sickness enfeebles and impairs our bodily functions. God knows—yes, we know ourselves—that we can never be really happy while any sin remains in us, while any impurity, any vanity, any self-seeking taints our life, mars our happiness, and destroys our peace. God knows this ; God's will and purpose for us is that we should be restored to perfect spiritual health. He cannot rest satisfied with us till we are ; but, if sin is a disease, if it does, like physical disease, destroy our health, our happiness, our life, then, how can God, if He really loves, ever be reconciled to it? Would it not be false kindness to spare us pain, if pain alone can cure us? Should we not cry shame upon the surgeon who spared the knife, though he knew that only by cutting deeply could the mischief be removed. "Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry? shall Thy jealousy burn like fire for ever?" cried one of old, smarting under the pain inflicted by the great Healer of souls ; and so we cry, as the fire of suffering touches our very soul ; so we cry, not knowing that it is the fire of Divine love purging and cleansing our souls from the foul

corruption of sin. Yes, and the more inveterate the sin, the more hardened the sinner, the more drastic must be the remedy, the more severe the pain. And so even that scathing denunciation of Scribe and Pharisee may be a proof of truest love, for into a conscience seared and deadened and hardened by so dangerous a sin as hypocrisy, no gentler word could have hoped to find its way.

6. Oh, if we one and all could only believe that God loves the sinner always, though He hates the sin; if we could only see that Eternal Love can have no truce, no compromise with sin, and that where sin is there love most shows itself as fire—as fire which burns and must burn till all that is impure, corrupt, and worthless is consumed—what a light would be thrown upon the dark passages of the Bible. What a perfect reconciliation is brought about between the mercy and the wrath of God. What a glory comes upon the Cross. For on the Cross I see God in Christ sealing a life of love with a death of love. I see God in Christ unveiling to all ages and for all time this heart of love, holding out His arms to welcome the prodigals back to their true place as sons of God, assuring them of His full and free forgiveness. “God commended His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But I see also man in Christ acknowledging the justice of the Divine sentence upon sin; saying “Amen” to that law of God, “The soul that sinneth, it must die,” must suffer. I see Jesus Christ the Son of Man making a solemn acknowledgment

on the part of man that sin must be crucified, mortified, eradicated, burnt out, if man would be perfectly reconciled to God, and live in fellowship with Him. Just as the way back to physical health lies through pain, so the way back to spiritual health, to salvation, lies through the Cross. In the Cross the two opposing texts meet in union, for we see inscribed upon the Cross not only "God so loved the world," but also this, "They that are Christ's must crucify the flesh."

One word more. Can we not in the light of this reconciliation face that dark unknown future which lies beyond the grave more calmly, more trustfully, yes, more hopefully? For we know that God's punishments are not arbitrary, are not vindictive, but like everything else in His universe, they follow fixed laws. "Whatsoever a man soweth that must he also reap." We know that God is Love, and, knowing this, we can trust Him to be at least as merciful as ourselves. We know that here He punishes in mercy to correct, to awaken, to reform, to restore; and we know that His mercy is inexhaustible, His forgiveness unlimited, except by one condition, and by one condition only, the repentance of the sinner. God cannot compel him to be saved; he must yield of his own free will. So long as he answers "I will not" to the Eternal "thou must," so long must he remain in the outer darkness, voluntarily shut out from the light and warmth of the Divine love. We ask, but we ask in vain, will death be the limit to the merciful punishment, the loving correction of God?—we can get no certain answer; but this we

know, that He has told us that He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He will never cease to plead with any soul in whom a spark of spiritual life remains unquenched ; and, knowing this, we may trust Him with the work of His own hands, sure that He will not despise it, sure that each soul will receive what it ought to receive, and be dealt with as it ought to be dealt with at the hands of Infinite Love.

IV.

FAITH AND WORKS.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—ROM. iii. 28.

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”—ST. JAMES ii. 24.

THIS certainly sounds like an opposition between faith and works. Any one reading the New Testament superficially, any one coming to the study of it with a strong bias towards one side of truth, any one who fails to see that truth has more than one side, will either conclude that the two apostles here contradict one another, *or* pinning his faith to one, will simply overlook and ignore the other altogether: It is interesting to trace the causes of their being placed in opposition. Luther did actually think, and did boldly say, that St. James' teaching could *not* be reconciled with St. Paul. He accordingly set very little store upon St. James' epistle. He called it an epistle of straw, because it seemed to the great Reformer to oppose or at least to qualify that doctrine of justification by faith which he had been the chief means of restoring to Christendom, and

which he naturally and rightly regarded as the very essence of the religion of Christ.

We know that Luther may have been one-sided, may have been guilty of many mistakes, mistakes from which the Church of Christ has suffered severely ever since ; but when we realize what the condition of religion was when he sounded the first note of the Reformation, we shall not judge him hardly, or wonder at his mistakes.

For I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that in the age preceding the Reformation, Christianity, popular Christianity, had lost its spiritual character almost entirely, and had been brought down to the level of Judaism, owing chiefly to the evil influence of the papacy, and I think we may say, to the degradation of the official ministry generally. The sacramental machinery of the Church, which Christ meant to be the greatest help in reconciling men to God, had become a hindrance rather than a help, for instead of being the chief means of bringing the soul into communion with God, it really stood between the soul and God. The Church claimed an absolute authority over the conscience. No soul could hope for salvation, except by complete obedience and passive submission to the Church. Popular teaching practically came to this, that salvation could be obtained and eternal punishment escaped by the fulfilment of certain duties which the Church imposed, by the punctual performance of certain religious acts which the Church enjoined, by the undergoing of certain penances which the Church

enforced, or even by payment of certain moneys, which the Church accepted instead of the penances. If these things were punctually and obediently performed, the Church had the power of securing salvation in the world to come. Of course there were exceptions. Then, as always, there were men better than their creed ; but this was the popular conception of religion at the time of the Reformation. The Atonement of Christ, the grace of God,—faith in these as the motive power, as the vital principle of religion ; these were entirely, or almost entirely, lost sight of ; men were practically taught that they were accounted righteous before God for their own works and deservings, rather than by faith in the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What Luther did, then, was to break through this legal, external, mechanical, unspiritual system of religion, which rested almost entirely on Church authority, and to bring men back to the true foundation, to living faith in a living Christ. What he did was to bring men back to the New Testament, and especially to the teaching of St. Paul, and to show that to St. Paul the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins realized by faith, is the true and only starting-point, the real inspiring power of all true religion.

To Luther, fighting with all the energy of a fiery and impetuous nature, against what he held to be a degrading, a soul-destroying conception of religion, this new, this precious truth, which he had recovered, of the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins

through faith in Jesus Christ, became naturally the centre and the essence of Christianity, nay, more, it became the whole of Christianity. Anything more than this was regarded with suspicion, any teaching which laid stress on human effort, on human work, or even on means of grace, was disliked, overlooked, ignored.

See, then, what this recoil from the religion of works to the opposite extreme leads to, see how it has affected the popular religion of Protestant countries.

Fallen man has been regarded as lying under the wrath of God, utterly helpless, utterly impotent, with no spark of good left in him, no power of doing anything but works which are hateful to God, with no power to choose good left him, no power of escaping from the penalty of eternal death; but that penalty has been paid by the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for those on whom the wrath of God against sinful men has been poured out. Every sinner, therefore, to whom the Atonement is made known, every sinner who accepts it by faith, is delivered from the penalty, is reconciled, is justified, is saved. You see here how everything is referred to the grace of God. Men were taught to believe that everything has been done for them, that it is all a free act of God's mercy and forgiveness. God does everything; man does nothing, except thankfully believe that all has been done for him.

This, I think, is a plain and unexaggerated account of the recoil from the *popular* Romanism of the sixteenth century to the *popular* Protestantism of modern England. Whereas once salvation was to be attained

by works, and faith in the grace of God was practically left out, now salvation is ascribed entirely to the grace of God, and works are practically left out. For it is easy to see how this view of the Sacrifice of Christ, as a solitary transaction with which we had no vital connection, led to a dislike of laying any stress on our own works, our own efforts, our own struggles, our own sacrifice; because this would seem to impair the completeness of the great sacrifice, this would seem to imply that the Atonement was not sufficient in itself, would seem to detract from the fullness of the grace and mercy of God.

What have been the consequences of this one-sided view of religion?

Faith has been dwarfed and stunted into a mere belief that a Sacrifice has been offered for us which God has accepted, that all we have to do is to thankfully accept it and rely upon it for our immunity from future punishment. Oh, cannot we see how religion has been degraded, how it has been made a purely selfish thing, a matter of saving one's own soul, and how the progress of the kingdom of God on earth has been fatally retarded by this fundamental error—the error of thinking that God does not need the help of man in regenerating the world; that Christ does not work through His Church and by His members?

I think this is not an unfair account of the process by which faith and works have been set in opposition to one another.

But let us go back to Holy Scripture and see if St. James and St. Paul are really in opposition, and see

if we cannot find in the New Testament a wider and a grander conception of faith, and a truer idea of what St. Paul means when he sets a justification by faith above a justification by works. It certainly cannot be good works that St. Paul disparages, it cannot be works of love and mercy that *he* decries, who makes faith which worketh by love, and so shows that it is alive, the centre of his system—this alone would be sufficient to show that he does not really contradict St. James, not to mention the glowing words of his Epistle to the Corinthians, where love is boldly placed above faith—and love which is not seen in action is not love at all.

No; what St. Paul does so energetically set his face against is the popular idea of religion in his time. His position is quite clearly laid down in the Epistle to the Romans, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness by him that worketh." St. Paul does not mean a man who spends his life in works of mercy and kindness, he means the man who, in his relations to God, takes up the position of a workman or a servant working for wages; the man who thinks of God as a master and himself as a slave, who acts on the principle of so much work done for God, so many duties observed, so many commandments kept, so much reward earned. It is this idea of works which St. Paul has in his mind when he says that a man is justified by faith

and not by deeds of the law. In other words, he says "Strive and struggle as much as you will to fulfil the commandments of God, you cannot succeed, you cannot satisfy yourself, you cannot find peace or happiness in religion, you cannot feel that you are in true relations with God until you have learned to look upon God as a Father instead of a Master, until you have learned to see in the Cross of Christ the perfect manifestation of Eternal Love, until you have realized that the Cross of Christ means the offer to you of fullest and freest forgiveness, if only you will hold out the hand of faith to accept it." The works which St. Paul disparages and condemns are always works done merely for the sake of earning a reward, of ingratiating one's self with God, or of satisfying one's conscience, or as a set-off against sin, never works which are the natural and spontaneous outcome of a life in true relations with God.

Having seen, then, what kind of works it is that St. Paul condemns, let us go on to see what faith means in the New Testament, especially in the writings of the same apostle; there is more than one aspect of it, there is more than one meaning, but all are closely linked together, and each springs naturally from the preceding.

The first meaning of faith is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the well-known definition, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." (*a*) The evidence of the unseen. Yes, that is the starting-point of all; the belief in the unseen world, in the invisible God, in spiritual

influences, the conviction that there is in the unseen something which corresponds to our higher nature, something which answers to our aspirations, our hopes, our spiritual needs, something to which our higher nature reaches out, and not in vain. But what follows from this conviction of the reality of spiritual things, this belief in an unseen God—all good, all holy, all true? Surely the feeling that we are out of harmony with this unseen world, that we are not in true relations with this Holy God, that our spiritual life is weak and feeble, that we need, above all things, the sense of forgiveness, the assurance of the love of the unseen God; in a word, we need the grace of God. But this grace of God, this free forgiveness, this assurance of love, is revealed in the Cross of Jesus Christ; and (*b*) here comes in the second aspect of faith. It is the response of our heart to this loving offer; it is the leaping up of our souls to accept it; it is the instrument, to speak correctly, by which we appropriate it, or, to speak more simply, the hand which we stretch forth to take the gift of God. St. Paul expresses it in one short sentence: "By grace ye are saved through faith." It is the grace of God with all that that implies, accepted by the hand of faith, which puts you into a state of salvation, which frees you from the burden of sin, which enables you to start on the spiritual life, to step out with new vigour, new energy, new hope, new inspiration, warmed and cheered by the sunlight of God's love. This is the second aspect of faith; this is, properly speaking, justifying faith. There can be

no idea of merit, no idea of works here ; it is simply the responding of your heart and soul and conscience to the love of God.

But, now, what follows from this faith in Jesus Christ as the revelation of the Father's love? What *must* follow if I really do believe in Jesus Christ? Surely I must accept Him as my Guide, as my Master, as my King ; I must trust Him absolutely ; I must lean upon Him entirely ; I must follow Him where He leads me ; I must obey Him when He speaks to me. And what does faith become now, but faithfulness, loyalty, self-surrender? If I have (c) real faith in Christ, I must be loyal to Him, I must be true to Him in thought and word and deed. No one can deny that this is the faith which rings out in many a noble passage of the epistles of St. Paul, of him whose proudest title was the slave of Jesus Christ, to whom to live was Christ, who bore on his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Faith now rises from a grateful acceptance of forgiveness, into faithfulness and loyalty to Jesus Christ, devotion to His person, following in His footsteps, inspired by His example.

And this aspect of faith leads naturally to one which is higher still. (d) We know what a power there is in real loyalty ; we know that unwavering unsuspecting faith in a person who can inspire it, does give to the man who believes a strength and confidence which is certainly not naturally his. Unwavering faith can transform a weak, commonplace man into a hero. Again and again has history proved the truth of this. Faith is a mysterious power by which the vitality,

the strength, the courage of one person passes into others. The experience of our own common life will illustrate this. We have some friend who is good and wise and brave and true; we believe in him thoroughly, we trust him implicitly; well, do we not feel when we are with him, under the spell of his influence, enjoying his conversation, feeling his power—do we not feel the better and stronger ourselves? Do we not feel lifted up, inspired, by the same high sense of duty, the same attraction to what is noble and good by which he is filled? Do we not feel that, while we are under his influence, we could not do a mean and shameful and selfish act? And may not this influence be a lasting one, and remain as an inspiring force even after our friend is passed away and dead? It is our faith which in some mysterious way causes his vitality to pass into us. Now does not this analogy help us, in some degree at least, to understand the highest meaning of faith in Christ? Is it not that relation between the soul of the believer and the Master, the Saviour he believes in, by which the life of Christ, the power of Christ, the purity, the strength, the inspiration of Christ, passes into his soul through love and obedience? Listen once more to the great apostle: “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” He could hardly express more clearly and distinctly that aspect of faith which I have been trying to illustrate by human

analogy. I do not mean of course to say that there is no difference between the grace which flows from Christ into the soul of the believer through faith, and that mysterious influence which is communicated from one person to another. But this last helps us to understand the first, helps us to see that there is nothing unreasonable or unnatural in our being able to receive the life of Christ into our soul, when we see something like it, something which is at least a shadow of it, taking place under our very eyes and within our own experience.

Am I exaggerating the place of faith, the power of faith? Am I making faith everything? Surely not. "By grace ye are saved through faith." What use would faith be without the grace of Jesus Christ, without the living power of the Son of God? But as far as we ourselves are concerned, we cannot attribute too much to faith, for without faith this superabundant life of Christ cannot reach us, cannot influence us, cannot pass into us. "He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Just as the sap cannot flow from the heart of the oak into the branches unless the channels are open, so neither can the life of Christ flow into our souls if the way is barred by unbelief, by faithlessness.

Surely it is here, in this highest aspect of faith, that we find the perfect reconciliation between faith and works.

Where popular Protestantism failed was in regarding the sacrifice of Christ, the work of Christ, as something in which Christians had no part or share ;

faith was only the grateful acceptance of something which had been done for us. "Stand still, and see the salvation of God," was its motto. And so, naturally, the good works of Christians were disparaged as seeming to detract from the perfection of Christ's work. But when we see faith rising from the grateful acceptance of forgiveness into union with Christ, then the difficulty vanishes, then all opposition ceases; then we begin to see that the Church of Christ cannot be thought of as apart from Christ, or the members as separated from their Head; then we see what being in Christ is, then we begin to understand that the Church is Christ. Through the Church Christ works. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the true motto of the true Christian Churchman. The life that I live, I live in Christ; the works that I do Christ does in me. Here, then, can be no thought of human merit; here, then, is no idea of earning a reward; here, then, is no place for pride and self-sufficiency; here, then, is no fear of encroaching on the one Sacrifice of Christ. For as He is, so are we in this world. Here, in this loftier region, the two opposing truths, so long separated, may at last meet, and find their perfect union in Jesus Christ.

V.

CALLED AND CHOSEN.

“Many are called, but few chosen.”—ST. MATT. xx. 16.

TWICE do these words occur, at the end of two of our Lord's parables of the Kingdom of Heaven—the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, and the parable of the marriage supper, though there is some doubt about their genuineness in the first, and in neither case is their meaning clear, or their application very obvious.

“Many are called, but few chosen.”

Can it really be, as many have thought, and do think, that Jesus Christ is here pronouncing a solemn final sentence upon mankind. Can He mean that the few only are to be saved hereafter, and the many to be lost? Can He mean that humanity generally shall be consigned to everlasting misery, while a select few are chosen to go to heaven. So have the words been paraphrased by preachers and teachers, and so has the gospel of hope been turned into something very like the gospel of despair. It is in dealing with passages such as these, that the warning to observe

the proportion of the faith is so needful, the danger of one-sidedness so great. Fix your eyes on one certain set of passages in the New Testament, where the harder and sterner side of religion is taught with no uncertain sound, where the inevitable consequences of sin are seen in their true light ; consequences from which there can be, there *ought* to be, no escape, where the way of life is shown to be narrow and difficult, needing an earnestness, a self-sacrifice, a perseverance which only the few seem capable of ; fix your attention on these, and on these alone, and you must come to the conclusion that the doctrine of election, which is associated with the name of Calvin, is, after all, the true one ; and only a select few can hope to be saved from everlasting and irrevocable condemnation. But we turn to the other side of the New Testament teaching, we listen to the gracious words of that Saviour Who came to preach the glad tidings, to bring light and life and hope to a world which lay in darkness and the shadow of death ; Who came to seek and to save that which was lost ; Who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them ; Who has taught us to think of Himself as the good Shepherd, always lovingly, tenderly, patiently, searching for the wanderers, and bringing them home to the fold ; Who has taught us to think of God as the Father Who is always watching for the return of the prodigal, receiving him, when he does return, with open arms ; Who has, in the Passion and on the Cross, drawn back the veil from the heart of God, and shown us how inexhaustible is the character

of the Divine Love, how utterly it transcends all human conception. I say, when we let the full force of this side of Christ's teaching come home to us, to our hearts, to our reason, and to our conscience, we cannot acquiesce in that narrow view which regards the few who are chosen as the few who alone are finally saved. Nay, look at the little band of the Apostles of Christ; they, if any, were the few chosen, the few elect, and if the chosen mean the finally saved, they, at any rate, were safe. But He had *called* unto Him His disciples, and of them He had *chosen* twelve, whom also He called apostles, and yet of those chosen twelve, one fell, and the fall was worse than that of the worst sinner of the many who are called. Ought not this alone to warn us that the election is not necessary to final salvation, that the chosen are not necessarily the finally saved?

I suppose that there are very many who would agree with me so far; nay, I believe that the universal conscience and the universal reason must naturally shrink from the doctrine of election of the few to final salvation, and the reprobation of the many, as unworthy of, as irreconcilable with the revelation of God as Love. We may not be able to unite the two sides of the Gospel teaching in a logical and consistent system, yet at least we cannot rest in Calvinism. But, even if we reject the creed of Calvin, we do not escape from the difficulty. Still, to every thoughtful person, the most perplexing of all problems is the apparent waste of human life, the comparative failure of the Gospel of Christ to

regenerate the world. If I might speak for myself, I should say that I find no difficulties at all in religion compared to this.

When I pass through the streets of a great city, when I am in the midst of the thronging crowds of London, or when I try to realize to myself the teeming millions of human beings in India or in China, when I think of the innumerable multitude who are outside all religious influences whatever, or when I remember the myriads of those who *have* heard of Christ, who *have* listened to His gracious invitations, and yet are still so unmoved, so careless, so worldly, so wrapped up in their business and their pleasure, apparently so utterly regardless of the unseen, the spiritual, and the eternal ; when all this is borne in upon my soul, I do feel that other difficulties pale into insignificance compared with them. Sure I am that it is this seeming waste of human life, of the individual life which weighs most heavily upon the souls of those who think and feel for their brother men ; it is this thought which wrings the almost despairing, the pathetic cry from our great modern poet, as he contemplates it in nature--

“So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,
That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,
I falter where I firmly trod,
And, falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Ah! no; we cannot find much comfort, much hope, much encouragement in nature. Nature alone is stern and inexorable with all offenders against her laws. Nature has no good news, no gospel for humanity, no glad tidings of a Father "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness."

And so we come back to revelation, to Holy Scripture, to the Gospel of the Fatherhood of God, of the forgiveness of sins. Does this Gospel help us? Does it throw any light upon this great problem? Does it give us more hope for the world, for the multitudes who have lost their way, than natural religion does? If we accept that interpretation of the Gospel message which limits the hope of future salvation to the few and condemns the many to endless woe; if there is no other way of explaining those words of our Lord, except by referring them to the world beyond the grave, then the Gospel of the Grace of God is as stern and inexorable as the laws of nature themselves.

But I believe that there is another explanation of them, more natural, more intelligible, more hopeful.

Remember again where they occur, as the conclusion of two parables of the Kingdom of God or

the Kingdom of Heaven. What is the Kingdom of Heaven, which we find represented under such figures as a marriage feast, and as a vineyard in which men are called to work? Is it the future life? Is it what we think of as heaven? Is it a condition of things entirely distinct from this world in which we live?

We know that it is not, we know that the very figure of the vineyard in which men are to work, forbids such an explanation; and yet I firmly believe that one reason, and one chief reason, of the mistaken interpretation of so much of our Lord's teaching, lies in relegating this Kingdom of Heaven, of which He speaks so often, to some vague, far-distant, future condition of things. Oh, how easily would such a conception of it grow as soon as the fervour of early enthusiasm dies away. Men look out upon the world, they see how evil it is, how difficult, how insuperable, how hopeless the task of regenerating it; and so, gradually but surely, the great purpose of God, which has inspired the visions of the prophets and the songs of the psalmists, the great object for which Christ became incarnate and died, and for which His apostles laboured, the establishment of a Kingdom of God on earth, the union of the nations in a City of God, falls into the background, and religion becomes degraded into a means by which men may save themselves from future punishment. The world is an evil world, incurably evil. It lies under the wrath of God. Nothing can be done for it or with it. Those who would save their own

souls must have as little to do with it as possible ; they must regard it as a place where they have to stay for a short time, but all their thoughts, all their hopes should be fixed upon the world to come. It is this narrower view of religion which drove monks and hermits and recluses away from the world, to live in retirement in order to prepare for a heaven to come, and so deprived the world of the leaven, the salt, the light of their influence and example which it needed so sorely. It is this selfish view of Christianity which has given a handle to the secularist in his attack upon a religion which does not aim so much at making men better citizens, more honest, generous, earnest, unselfish workers ; does not endeavour to make this world more worth living in ; does not try to realize a Kingdom of God here and now, but teaches them to look only to and think only of that Kingdom as something entirely confined to the other world, the future life. And yet we pray day by day, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth."

I think this narrow, selfish idea of religion is passing away in its turn. It certainly has been predominant in the ages that are gone ; and it certainly has influenced our interpretation of the teaching of Christ.

But I am sure a fair and patient study of the Gospel will show us that Christ does not draw that deep line between this world and the world to come that many Christians have done. He reminds the Jews again and again that the Kingdom of Heaven is not something in the distant future, but here in the midst

of them already at work. "The kingdom is within you." He teaches His disciples that they can and they ought to be living the eternal life here and now. He teaches us that we can make this life a heaven or a hell. He does certainly paint in darkest colours, in sternest language, the punishment of those who wilfully shut themselves out from the kingdom. I speak with great diffidence on so difficult a subject ; but this I would venture to say, that much of Christ's teaching which has been referred to the world to come, may and ought to be understood of the Kingdom of God which He came to set up here on earth.

But, if this is so, the grand purpose of Christ's work was the foundation of this Kingdom of Heaven on earth. If this lay nearest His heart, if He devoted, as we know He did, so much of His time and of His teaching to the training of that little band of disciples who were to form the nucleus of the Kingdom, then we can understand better what such a saying as the many called and the few chosen may really mean. Then there will be no occasion for limiting it to the final salvation of the few and the final condemnation of the many, for we must regard it as just the expression of the principle on which Christ would work, on which God has always worked, in extending His Kingdom.

It does *not* mean that the few are chosen by God to be the recipients of His favours ; it does *not* mean that they are chosen for their own sakes to be privileged, to be rewarded, to be honoured, to

be made happy while the many are rejected and reprobated; but it means that God chooses the few for the sake of the many, that God will work upon the many, and perhaps save the many, through the few. It means that the few are chosen not to privilege and reward, but to responsibility, to the posts of danger and of difficulty. They are chosen to be the witnesses of Christ, to be a noble army of martyrs, to sacrifice everything, to surrender everything, to subordinate everything to the one great object of extending the Kingdom of God on earth. Surely that is the true idea of election, that is why God chose out the people of Israel, not, as the later Jews thought, that they, and they alone, might be the favourites of heaven to the exclusion of all the world besides—"Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests"—but in order that they might be the missionaries and evangelists of the world—"In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." This is why Christ chose His twelve apostles, not, as the apostles thought and hoped at one time, that they might share the glories of an earthly kingdom, that they might sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom; but He chose them to the baptism of fire, to the heights of self-sacrifice, to the way of the cross. Let St. Paul answer for the chosen few, "I think God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." This is what the few were elected to, this is what they were chosen for, to be lights in the world, to be the salt of the earth, to be

witnesses to Christ that the world might believe. "For their sakes I consecrate Myself," is the motto of the Master ; "For their sakes I consecrate myself," is the motto of all His chosen servants. Here, then, seems to me the key to the meaning of election, the explanation of this difficult saying. The purpose of God is a purpose of mercy and grace. He will have all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He wills that this whole race of men, which has been redeemed by His Son, may come at last to realize its redemption, to live redeemed lives. But it is His Will, too, that this work of redemption, this extension of His Kingdom, shall be carried out by men. He is always calling men to work in His vineyard, always inviting the many to work with Him, to put themselves in His hands to be used for His purpose. The call is heard by the many—"Their sound is gone out into all lands"—it is responded to only by the comparatively few.

It is always, comparatively speaking, the few who give themselves up entirely to the call ; it is always the few who are chosen to consecrate themselves ; it is always the few—but, thank God, the ever-increasing few—who, inspired by the spirit of Christ, and striving to follow in the footsteps of Christ, become themselves sources of inspiration and centres of influence to the many.

Does not all history and all experience witness to this? From the day when the first nucleus of the Church went forth from the upper room at Jerusalem to begin the tremendous work of witnessing to their

Lord, it is the few, whether they be tens or hundreds or tens of thousands, who have been leavening the many, bringing light into the dark places of the earth, purifying the society round them, shaming the careless, the selfish, the self-indulgent, encouraging the weak, stimulating the slothful, stemming the tide of wickedness and vice, checking corruption, gradually raising the moral standard of the many, really acting to some extent, as Christ had said they should act, like lights in the world, like salt in the earth, and slowly, imperceptibly perhaps, but surely extending the Kingdom of God here and now. This is the part which God has called His elect to play, this is the task which He has given them to do, to be fellow-workers with Him in regenerating the world.

It is true that this view of election does not solve the great difficulty of the waste of human life. It gives no answer to the question, "What of the multitudes who are falling every day like autumn leaves, who are passing into the unseen, to all appearance untouched by religious influence, unconverted, unbelieving?" We cannot answer it, but we who believe in Christ, who accept His revelation of the Father, have this comfort, have this consolation, we know that they are in the hands of the Father, we know that every soul will be judged on its merits, we are sure that perfect allowance will be made by unerring wisdom for every adverse circumstance, for "pangs of nature, sins of will, defects of doubt, and taints of blood," and that the judgment will be pronounced, and the punishment inflicted by perfect

love. And, knowing this, we, too, may "faintly trust the larger hope," neither, on the one hand, making light of sin and its consequences, nor, on the other, limiting the mercy and love of God.

But our part is not to speculate about a future over which God has drawn, and doubtless wisely drawn, the veil. Our part is to respond to the call of Christ for more labourers into His vineyard. If what has been said is true, if Christ is working now through His loyal-hearted servants, surely what He wants is to increase their number, to extend their area, to make their influence wider, to leaven society more thoroughly. And to that He is calling us, calling you and me to be of His elect, calling us to something higher than respectability, to something more than the average life, to more real consecration, to more real self-sacrifice, to a life which bears some marks of the Cross, yes, and of the Resurrection too ; a life which will witness in some sort to the transforming power of His religion, of His grace.

And, lastly, what is the reward of the elect? We are told that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of men the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." But I would not speak of the joys of heaven now. I would point you to the answer which Christ gave to a similar question put to Him by St. Peter in the very passage from which my text is taken, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee ; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them,

Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory"—that is, I take it, in the new era, the Christian dispensation—"ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes." What does it mean? Does it not mean this, "You will be the real rulers of God's new Israel, you will have a power and an influence over men which no king has ever possessed, you will be the real leaders of the world; from your example, your devotion, your teaching, your writings, men will draw their inspiration, their courage, their hope?" And has not this prophecy been verified? What statesman or king has influenced the world like the fishermen of Galilee, or the tentmaker of Tarsus?

And for the humble Christian, who tries to follow Christ, and to work with God, what reward is equal to the joy of having influenced even one soul for good, or of having helped to save one soul from falling? This is, indeed, to enter into, to understand, and to share in, the joy of our Lord.

VI.

FREE ACCESS TO GOD AND MEANS OF GRACE.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by Whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.”—ROM. v. 1, 2.

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ ?”—I COR. x. 16.

IN my last sermon I tried to put before you that view of election which I believe to be scriptural, that view which does throw some light upon one of the hardest of all questions, “Are there few that be saved ?” which does give some comfort and encouragement to those who feel perplexed and oppressed by the apparent waste of human life. It is that view of election which looks upon the few as chosen by God to lead the van of the world’s progress, to sacrifice themselves for the good of others, to leaven the world by their example and influence, to gradually raise the moral standard of the many—to act as lights in the world, as salt in the earth, to be the means by which the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of Christ ; and if this be the true view, then we can see, we must see, that the purpose of Jesus Christ, the Will of God, can only be carried out by the elect becoming

more numerous, their area extended, their influence becoming more widely felt, by the leaven of their example penetrating the world more deeply and more thoroughly. And if this *is* indeed the way in which the Kingdom of God is to be realized on earth, then we can enter into the spirit of that great prayer of Jesus Christ, "that they all may be one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." Who cannot see how terribly the purpose of Christ is hindered by our unhappy divisions? who cannot see the enormous accession of strength which the cause of God and Christ would receive, if Christians were united, if they could pull together, if they could stand shoulder to shoulder, as earnest followers of Christ, in this great work of extending the Kingdom, instead of pulling against one another, thwarting, opposing, resisting one another? The waste of force, of spiritual power, is enough to make angels weep.

The subject of election is more closely connected with the subject I have now taken for consideration. For nothing, perhaps, hinders unity, nothing divides Christians so much as differences on that greatest of all questions, how the soul of man is brought into communion with God, differences about what are called the means of grace. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, through the work of the one Mediator, all men can have free access to God, all can have fellowship with God by faith in Jesus. No media, no church, no priesthood, no sacraments are necessary for salvation, though they may perhaps be helpful—that is one side. On the other side, the Catechism

of the Church of England teaches that Christ has ordained certain means of grace, certain means by which the soul is brought into union with Christ, and preserved in union with Christ, that these means are generally necessary for salvation, *i.e.* necessary for all, and that these Sacraments can be ministered only by those who have received authority from Christ by Ordination.

These, stated very briefly, are the two opposite positions. They seem difficult to reconcile. They both appeal confidently to Holy Scripture. Now, I think there can be not the least doubt that in the New Testament, the communion of the soul with God through faith in Jesus Christ, the freedom of access to God through the one Sacrifice, the great act of reconciliation, is far more prominent than the means of grace. The very essence of the Gospel is the proclamation of the good news of the Fatherhood of God and that all mankind are His children, to a world which had lost all knowledge of it, to a world which had no hope and was without God, to a world dead in trespasses and sins. If we could only realize this condition of the world, we should not be surprised to find apostles and evangelists making this good news—so new, so good—the burden of their teaching and their preaching; the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; reconciliation to God, the way back to their true position as sons of God, open to all through faith in Him Who had died for the sins of the world. Yes, and faith, the great, new, quickening, inspiring force, by which men were to

gain a living conviction of the reality of the Fatherhood of God, by which they were to appropriate the pardon so freely bestowed, in the power of which they were to surrender their lives to Christ and realize their vital union with Him. These were the great fundamental principles of the Gospel of Christ, and when we try to put ourselves back into that age and understand how good this news was, how inspiring, how welcome, but how different from anything men had heard before, what an utter change in all their ideas, their mode of life it involved ; what a surrender of old prejudices, of old practices, of old superstitions it required ; then we no longer wonder to find these great elementary vital principles of the Gospel again and again reiterated and enforced. "Ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." "Let us come boldly unto the throne." "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." "By Whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Such is the message, such is the teaching, which comes to us on page after page of the New Testament. And no one can doubt that this is the side of the apostolic teaching which is most prominent. But does it necessarily exclude the other side which maintains that this communion with God, this free access to God, is made attainable by means of grace? He who proclaimed most loudly, taught most strenuously the truth, that we have

access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, yet presupposes Baptism as the means by which we are admitted into it. "As many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ" (*i.e.* into union with Him) "have put on Christ," "Ye are buried with Him in Baptism." This new life, this free life, this life in Christ, is always entered upon by Baptism. Baptism is always the outward sign which initiates it. Yes, and the same Apostle who makes faith supreme, who is looked upon as the great opponent of forms and ceremonies, yet tells us most solemnly, that "the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the Blood of Christ, the bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ ;" teaching us that the union with Christ begun in baptism is maintained in a special and peculiar manner in the great ceremony of the Holy Eucharist. And wherever, whether in the history of the early Church as narrated in the Acts, or in the scanty remains of the earliest Christian writers outside the New Testament, wherever we catch a glimpse of the life and worship of the Church, we find that the Holy Eucharist is the one rallying point of that life, the centre of that worship, the sacrament of unity, and the special means of communion with the invisible Head of the Church. But why, it is asked, is it not made more prominent in the New Testament? Why, if it is indeed the centre of Christian life, the source of fellowship with Christ, the sacrament of unity, why does the New Testament make but one or two casual references to it? The question is not perhaps unnatural ; but it betrays a

misconception of the whole character and purpose of the writings of the New Testament. They are not, they were not, meant to be a systematic collection of articles on the Christian faith. They were not meant to be a manual of theology, in which each article of faith is dealt with fully and exhaustively, and assigned its proper place in the whole. Christianity is not primarily a book religion at all. The Gospels are the picture of a life and a death. A death by which we live. A life which was a revelation; a life which moulded and inspired the life of the Church—a life which the Church was to bear witness to, to represent and to live, “As I am so are ye in the world.”

The epistles, where we should perhaps expect to find the Sacraments more prominent, are, as every one knows, just letters written to answer certain questions which were agitating the churches, to meet certain difficulties, to reiterate and enforce certain great principles of Christ's which were liable to be misunderstood or perverted. They were written to churches which had been already founded and organized, and orally instructed in the simple doctrines and practices of primitive Christians; churches whose central religious rite we cannot doubt was “the breaking of the bread.” If this holy rite had not been abused and misunderstood, there would have been no reference at all to it in the epistles; there was no need to insist upon its observance if it was constantly observed, no need to make it the subject of teaching in a letter if its importance was universally acknowledged.

When once we realize that the Churches of Christ were founded and organized, living and growing with the vigorous life of early youth and early enthusiasm many years before the earliest book of the New Testament was written, and sixty years at least before the last book was in circulation, and when we understand that most of the epistles were written for a temporary purpose and generally with a special object, we need not wonder that such little stress, comparatively speaking, is laid by the writers on those means of grace, which were an unquestioned, a recognized part of the simple machinery of the Church.

Here again, then, we have to be on our guard against one-sidedness ; here again we need to keep the proportion of the faith, to hold these two sides of truth in proper balance.

The central doctrine of the Gospel of Christ is the Fatherhood of God and the offer of free forgiveness to all His lost children, of the promise of a new life in fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ ; for this, Christ became man, and lived and taught and died and rose again. The reality of this good news, the possibility of attaining it, the need and the power of faith for effecting this union with Christ Who knew man's nature, its weakness, its needs, knew what he wanted, this is the essence of the Apostolic teaching. But, on the other hand, Christ appointed certain outward and visible means by which this new life with God, this union with Christ, was to be bestowed, maintained, and strengthened ;

and when you remember what man is, a mysterious union of animal and spiritual, you will see that sacraments—outward and visible signs by which spiritual life is conveyed—are not arbitrary, unnecessary interruptions of that free communion of the soul with God that men think they have a right to; but they are perfectly natural, perfectly intelligible—nay, and just what you might have expected Christ to appoint. For is not man himself a sacrament; is he not himself an invisible spiritual being; is he not, as I have said, the mysterious union of the spiritual and the material; is he not allied to what is below as well as to what is above, to what is earthly as well as to what is heavenly; all that he learns, all that he knows, all communications that he has with his fellows are through his senses—through ear, or eye, or tongue? He knows what beauty is by the sight of a beautiful face, or picture, or scenery. He knows what goodness is by reading or hearing of some heroic deed or noble life. He must be taught through ear, or eye, or tongue. He must be appealed to through his senses; he must learn through outward and visible means sacramentally. His mind, his intellect, his reason is appealed to, is nourished, strengthened, cultivated through the senses by outward means. How then can his spirit be an exception? Surely some means of grace are an absolute necessity, for even the Quaker, who has carried his dislike of them to the farthest extreme, yet uses them when he listens to the preacher, who appeals to him through the ear, who makes his voice

the outward means by which the soul is strengthened and refreshed.

I should say, then, that the bestowal of inward and invisible grace by outward means is an eminently natural and necessary thing, which corresponds exactly to our double nature.

But there is a far stronger reason than this. What is the Incarnation of the Son of God Himself but a great sacrament? God, the invisible, the spiritual, manifesting Himself in an outward and visible form, in response to the deepest needs of man. For man's deepest need is to know God, to feel that he is in true relations with God, to have fellowship with God. He was always, as St. Paul tells the Athenians, seeking God, "if haply he might feel after Him and find Him." "Lord, show us the Father"—"show us the Father." Yes, that has been the unspoken cry of millions of seekers after God. We are men, and we want some truer and more certain knowledge of God, to know what He is, what His character is; we want to see Him and to know Him in some form that we can understand, that we may have fellowship with Him.

The answer to this cry is the Incarnation. God meets man; God is in man. Man can see God in man. In the God-man is the character of God revealed, the heart of God unveiled, as far as man can know it here. "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Yes; by knowing Him, by faith in Him, loyalty to Him, by likeness to Him, by union with Him, men knew God, men entered into fellowship with God.

This is the answer of God to the need of man, to the cry for some outward and visible proof of the union of God with him, such as he could see with his eyes, which he could look upon, and his hands could handle. Yes; the Incarnation is indeed the great sacrament. It is the foundation, the reason, the explanation of the sacramental system of the Church; and you will always find, I think, that when faith in the reality of the Incarnation is strong and living, then belief in the Sacraments is strong. Where Sacraments are disparaged and slighted, there the Incarnation is—I will not say disbelieved—but it does not occupy its true position as the very centre of the Christian faith.

For if God did indeed condescend to reveal Himself to man under an outward and visible form, if in Jesus Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, if divine virtue, divine life flowed from His human touch to quicken, to heal, to restore, to strengthen; then surely it seems most natural that when the Saviour had passed into the unseen, the benefits of the Incarnation should be extended to *the faithful* in the same manner; that divine life, divine virtue, should still pass from Him to them through outward and visible means in answer to the touch of faith. And if so, if the Incarnation does necessarily and naturally involve the communication of life, of strength, of grace, through outward and visible symbols—what could be more natural, what could be more fitting than these simple elements which Christ has chosen of water, bread, and wine.

If my nature craves for some outward sign that a spiritual gift is really being given me for the strengthening and refreshing of my soul, where in the whole realm of nature could a more appropriate sign be found than the bread which is the chief support of my natural life, and the wine which stimulates and refreshes it, the wine which makes glad the heart of man.

The sacramental system of the Church rests on the Incarnation ; it corresponds exactly to man's nature. The outward means are just those which seem the most natural ; they do help us to realize the invisible and the spiritual. Without them faith would be at a disadvantage. Who cannot see it ? If there was nothing to remind us of the invisible, no outward sign of it, nothing to appeal to eye or ear ; if there was nothing to assist faith, how hard for faith to hold its own, for the spiritual to contend against the natural.

So we see the true place of means of grace ; so we reconcile them with that free communion of the soul with God by faith, which is the end of personal religion.

It is true that the fellowship with God through union with Jesus Christ is the one thing of supreme importance ; it is true that without faith this union with Christ is impossible. No one believes that more firmly than I do. "He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief." But, holding this, and believing this, it is no contradiction to believe *as* firmly that this union with Christ is

begun, continued, preserved, deepened, by faithful use of those means of grace through which the life of Christ flows into the soul of man. And while I would not for a moment limit the free grace of God ; while I would not for a moment deny that He can bestow His life, His grace, independently of Sacraments—who can doubt it?—yet I can still believe, with the Catechism of our Church, that they are generally necessary for true salvation. I do still believe with all my heart that through them, and through them alone, is it possible for any soul to enjoy that close living union with Christ which is salvation, which is eternal life ; a union which He Himself has promised in words that find their fullest deepest meaning in the Sacrament which He ordained, “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.”

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATIONS.

PREACHED IN LENT, 1890.

VII.

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATIONS (I.).

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."—ST. MATT. iv. 1.

"In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—HEB. iv. 15.

As we approach the subject of the Temptation of our Lord, we are met at the very outset by a real difficulty. We are face to face with a great problem, for which we must try to find a solution. I mean, of course, the difficulty connected with the double nature of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is God incarnate, if He Who lived and taught in Palestine was very God of very God, how could He be in any true sense exposed to temptation? Must He not have known all things, and seen at a glance through the wiles of the tempter? Would not His Divine nature have wrapped Him round with an impenetrable shield of holiness against which all the fiery darts of the evil one must have fallen harmless and ineffectual? For God cannot be tempted with evil. We seem to be confronted here with a great dilemma.

On the one hand; if Jesus Christ could not be really tempted; if His temptation involved no

struggle, no strain, no pain, no conflict, how can He be truly man; how can He be an example to us; and how can He have that sympathy with us which comes from really sharing in our trials and feeling our infirmities?

On the other hand, if He could be tempted, if He could *really feel* that impulse toward evil, that enticement to sin without which there is no such thing as temptation, how can He be "very God of very God"?

We may meet this difficulty in two ways. We may say, This is one of those mysteries of religion into which reason has no right to intrude; one of those primary contradictions which we cannot hope to reconcile. Reason must therefore retire and give place to faith. We believe in the perfect humanity of our Lord, we believe in His perfect divinity. Both are cardinal articles of the Christian creed. But *how*, if He be very God, He can be really man, *how* He can undergo a real human experience such as temptation implies, passes our comprehension. We accept it by an act of faith, we believe, we trust, we love, we worship, but we cannot, perhaps we are not meant to, understand. Now I would not for the world depreciate the simple childlike faith "which believes nor questions how." The poet's words ring in my ears—

"Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days."

I know there are inner sanctuaries of religion where we hear the warning, "Put off thy shoes." It is true, I know it, that "fools rush in where angels fear to

tread." And yet this very reverence for holy things may surely be carried too far, if it leads to unquestioning acquiescence, to unreasoning acceptance of religious truth; if it leads to an unintelligent study of the Bible; if it encourages a habit of suspecting our intelligence when we read it or hear it read. Some of you who are earnest and thoughtful students of the Word of God will doubtless repudiate the suggestion as unwarranted; but I cannot help feeling that such an impression is widely prevalent, when, for instance, I read in the pages of a popular review an essay on one of our Lord's parables, in which the writer begins by asserting with some confidence, that the Christian leaves his attention at the threshold of his church as a Mussulman does his shoes; he does not really believe that anything which he will hear within its walls is meant for intelligent attention. And then the writer goes on to illustrate this conclusion by telling us of a tourist in the Lakes who, in the course of conversation with a postman of the district, happened to mention a journey in Palestine which he had just taken, and was answered by the exclamation, "Do you really mean to tell me, sir, that there is such a place as Jerusalem in this world?" This question, the writer maintains, caricatures but does not distort the feeling of average orthodoxy towards the whole history that centres in Jerusalem.

Now even if we deny that this fairly represents the habit of mind of ordinary churchgoers—if we make large allowance for exaggeration—yet I doubt whether such a conclusion as this could be formed without

some considerable foundation ; in fact, I believe there is, to many minds among us, an air of unreality, an atmosphere of other worldliness, to use a cant term, about the Gospel story, which might easily lead in some cases to the doubt so naively expressed whether there really was such a place as Jerusalem in this world. Yes, and whether Christ really lived and taught and suffered and died, as the evangelists relate. To many minds the Christ of the Gospels is like a beautiful statue in a Cathedral, rather than a real breathing person living a true human life, sharing in true human experiences; like the Christ of the old masters, with the bright halo, the flowing robe, the placid face, rather than the Christ depicted by our great religious painter, the Christ in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, the Christ in the picture of the Shadow of Death, the Christ as He was known to His brethren and His neighbours at Nazareth, the Christ Who veiled His godhead from the people round Him, veiled it even from Himself, that He might be a real Son of man. And, if this is so, surely the other is the more excellent way. To use our reason—God's own gift to us—to use our reason reverently and patiently (the only faculty, as Bishop Butler has reminded us, we have by which to judge of revelation itself), in the study of those questions in which it ought to find its highest exercise ; and I would ask those among you who would rather believe and worship, than question how, those happy souls who feel no difficulties, and experience no doubt, to be patient with me, for the sake of those—and how many

there are—who do find the intellectual difficulty a real hindrance to faith.

The problem, then, which we have to solve, at least to throw light upon, is this: how the faith in the Divine Christ, which is the essence of Christ, can be held intelligently, together with a belief in the true manhood of Jesus, Who can be a pattern and an example to us, Who could be tempted as we are, and conquer temptation after struggle and conflict.

And, in answering this question, I shall go behind theology, and appeal to Holy Scripture itself. What saith the Scripture?

1. It bears emphatic witness to the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Not only is there no trace of sin in the portrait drawn for us by apostles and evangelists, not only is the life and character of our Master, taken as a whole, unstained by any moral flaw, but we have the express testimony of Himself and His disciples. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" is His own challenge to the Jews, and this challenge is taken up by those who knew Him best: by St. Peter, who speaks of Him as "the Lamb without blemish and without spot, Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth:" by St. John, who tells us that "in Him was no sin:" by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who writes, that "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But I need not multiply proofs of this, we feel instinctively, that the claim which He made to be the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the King of Truth, to be in His one person the

resting-place for the weary and heavy laden, could never have been made by one who was conscious of even the slightest taint of sin.

2. The Holy Scripture, which from first to last testifies to the sinlessness of Christ, is no less clear on the reality of His temptation; and first let us remember that there are two ways, and only two ways, in which man can be tempted. He may be drawn away to sin by the enticement of pleasure, or he may be turned aside from good by the fear of pain, the shrinking from suffering.

Our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, *i.e.* He was tempted in those two possible ways. Temptations of the first kind culminated in the attack made upon Him in the wilderness. Temptations of the second kind assailed Him most severely during the Agony in Gethsemane and the desolation on the Cross, for I cannot doubt that the two last, the Agony in Gethsemane, the cry on the Cross, must be put in line, as it were, with the first. The devil, we are told, left Him *for a season*, after the failure of his first attempt to make the human will swerve from the Divine Will by worldly allurements. But again and again, as the Christ began to descend into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the Cross with all its horrors loomed full in view, must the temptation have presented itself to Him, to shrink from the anguish so clearly foreseen. "Father, save me." A temptation immediately rejected. "For this cause came I unto this hour." And then the Agony in the Garden; whatever else it may mean,

at least it means this : the last and deadliest assault of Satan upon the Will of Jesus, all the forces of evil concentrated in one supreme attempt to force the Will of the Son of man, if but for one moment, to rebel against the Will of the Father. And if we have no evidence of the reality of the first temptation, here, at least, in the Garden of Gethsemane, there is no room to doubt it. Here, at least, we know that the Lord felt the full force of it, as, perhaps, no man has ever felt it, as the sweat of agony starts from His forehead like drops of blood, under the stress and strain of this awful conflict with evil. The human will may be bent like a bow, but it never yields a hair's breadth. There is no vestige of consent to the suggestions of the tempter, without which there could be no sin. "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me : nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He triumphed here as He triumphed on the Cross, but not without a conflict and struggle as real, if words mean anything, as any which has ever been undergone by man.

Does not Holy Scripture, then, oblige us to believe that Jesus really felt temptation, was susceptible to its influence ? He must have done so if He was true man, for, to the nature of man, enjoyment is dearer than privation, honour than disgrace, a throne than a cross ; but, though He felt the force of it, it never influenced His Will, He never dwelt with pleasure on it. He never for a moment consented to it. He never wavered in His rejection. Without hesitation He trampled it underfoot, "It is written," "Thy will be done."

3. Holy Scripture points clearly to a moral progress in the human life of Jesus. What else can be meant when we are told that "Though He were a Son, *yet learned* He obedience by the things which He suffered ;" or, again, "It became Him for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, *to make* the Captain of their salvation *perfect* through sufferings"? And if we go back to His boyhood, we read that Jesus increased in wisdom as He increased in age and stature. If He increased in wisdom, if even He had to learn obedience through suffering, through conflict, through trial, if even He had to be *made perfect* by means of these trials, must not His moral development have been a truly human one. Only let us remember that this gradual consecration of all His powers, as they came to maturity, this progress towards perfection of His human character, is perfectly consistent with His complete sinlessness. It means that He grew from the spotless innocence of childhood to the perfect holiness of manhood. And just as the character of the saint who has passed through the discipline of trial and suffering is a more perfect thing than the innocence of the child, so the character of Jesus, when it had passed through the fire, was made perfect by suffering, more perfect than in the untried stainlessness of His undeveloped childhood.

But is not this, you may object, is not this the picture of a merely human Christ, distinguished from His brethren by His sinlessness alone? How can this

purely human development be conceivable, be possible, if His personality was Divine, if He was God incarnate? You will observe at least that I have drawn my conclusions from Holy Scripture, and from Holy Scripture alone. It is to the same source that we must make another appeal for an answer to this last question. Did the Son of God lay aside His Divine glory, surrender His Divine attributes, and take our nature with all its limitations, and become truly man?

Listen to one or two passages which seem to imply that He could, and that He did. "Ye know," says St. Paul, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." What riches could our Lord have given up for our sake except His Divine glory, which He exchanged for the poverty of human dependence and human limitations? As a king might surrender throne and crown, and make himself a simple citizen, so St. Paul seems to say, did the Son of God surrender His Divine prerogatives. And does not our Lord Himself imply the same when He prays to the Father on the eve of that Passion which was the gateway to glory, "Glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was," which He had, which He had laid aside, and which was now to be returned to Him. While it is only after His Resurrection that He proclaims, as the fruit of His victory, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth."

This idea is still more clearly expressed by St. Paul,

in the well-known passage in the Epistle to the Philippians (I quote from the Revised Version), "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."

What can we infer from language such as that, but that when the Word was made flesh He did empty Himself of His glory, He did surrender His Divine attributes, He did lay aside His omniscience, and submit to be limited as to His knowledge, as we men are limited. He had been a sharer in the Divine omnipotence; He gives it up to enter on an existence in which He has to ask, to receive, to obey.

By this sublime self-renunciation the Son of God is enabled to enter upon a course of human development similar in all respects to our own—sin only excepted. And so only can we understand how the Son of man could really increase in wisdom, could really feel temptation, could really learn obedience, could really be made perfect through suffering. Such, as I understand it, is the answer of Holy Scripture to the question which every thoughtful person is forced to ask.

And if you say the mystery still remains unsolved, how in a single personality can be united the natures of God and man? I grant it; but I would ask you to consider whether we have never heard of men who have lived for years with nothing to distinguish them from their neighbours, till a day came when under the stress of circumstances, and in response to

some urgent call of duty, some constraining obligation, powers awoke within them, talents (even genius) came to the light, undreamt of by the world, and of which the man himself had been but dimly conscious.

Or take a far commoner case. We have been tempted to sin, we have yielded to the temptation, we have indulged in the sin; yet all along, while yielding to it, while committing it, we have heard down in the recesses of our nature the deep undertone of remonstrance. From what? Another self, a better nature, a diviner self. Which was that real self? Are there not two natures in man; is he not made in the image of God?

Yes, and how many of us have lived a life limited by the things of sense, with the true self lying dormant, unrecognized, unrealized, till at last we too awoke in answer to a call from God; woke to a consciousness that we were partakers of the Divine nature, to a sense of a higher destiny before us than living and dying, like the beasts of the field, and gradually realized that we too were sons of God, of what we were capable, for what we were destined.

This is but an analogy, it does not explain the mystery; but it may help us to believe with a more intelligent faith in the union of God with man in the Person of Jesus Christ.

If we accept this view, which Holy Scripture certainly suggests, and the necessity of preserving the real humanity of Jesus Christ seems to require, then we can see at once the place of the temptation in the Life of our Lord. We may picture Him in His

early years a perfectly pure and innocent child, conscious, but only partially conscious, of a unique relation to His Father, passing unscathed through the ordinary temptations of faith, His conscience without scar, His character developing, His knowledge increasing, and as He reaches the maturity of manhood, becoming more and more clearly conscious of Who He is, of His destiny, of His work ; and then His baptism, marking an epoch in His life, His mission clearly realized, His relation to the Father, His Divine personality completely revealed to Him, the God within responding to the voice of the Father in the voice from Heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son," the supernatural powers bestowed upon Him by the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is now that He is tempted ; it is in connection with these miraculous powers that the temptation finds its chief significance. Summing it up in one sentence it means this : Will He consecrate these powers by a grand act of self-renunciation, absolutely to the Father's service, in carrying out the Father's Will ; or will He apply them in any possible way, even the most innocent, for His own use ?

Our thoughts go back instinctively to the Garden of Eden. Man stands again at the parting of the ways ; man with the power of not sinning restored to him, but man free to choose. What a crisis in the world's history ! The very existence of the Kingdom of God, the destiny of the race at stake. But Jesus triumphs where Adam had failed. And by His right choice the consequences of the wrong choice are

reversed. The old hope begins to be realized, the old prophecy to be fulfilled. The seed of the woman begins to bruise the serpent's head, the old order changeth, giving place to new. In the victory of Jesus we see the first-fruits and the pledge of the final victory of man in his conflict with evil.

VIII.

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATIONS (II.).

"If Thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—ST. MATT. iv. 3, 4.

I DO not think it is necessary to dwell long on what I may call the accessories of the Temptation ; to discuss the question whether the Evil One appeared to Jesus in a visible material form, and whether Christ was literally lifted up and set upon one of the pinnacles of the Temple roof, or enabled to see with His bodily eyes the wonders and glories of the civilized world. To some this may present no difficulty at all, to others it may be a serious obstacle to faith. All I would plead for is that the acceptance of the narrative as literally true in every detail, is not required as an article of faith ; those who do so accept it, need not be one whit more religious, more faithful, more spiritually minded, than those who see in it a poetic or dramatic representation of a supreme crisis in the Life of Jesus Christ. What we *are required to believe* is this : that the temptations were suggested to Him from without ; that

they were real temptations ; that they made no impression on His Will, and were not the creations of His own Mind ; but were unhesitatingly rejected. What does really concern us, as moral and spiritual beings, is the idea, the truth, the teaching which underlies the story, rather than the dress in which it is clothed. "The letter killeth, it is the Spirit which giveth life."

Two points I might mention which seem to me to make the literal view difficult to hold ; first, that the order of the temptations in St. Matthew is different from that in St. Luke ; and, secondly, that, if we had the account of the first evangelist alone, we might infer that it was not till after the Lord's long fast of forty days, that He was assailed by the Tempter ; whereas St. Luke expressly says that He was tempted during the whole time. "Being forty days tempted of the devil, and in those days He did eat nothing." There is nothing in either narrative to prevent our believing that the temptations of which the essence, so to speak, is summed up dramatically in those three vivid and graphic points, that these temptations were constantly crossing and recrossing the Mind of the Christ, as alone in the desert He prepared Himself for His work ; the plan of that work, if we may say so, growing ever more and more clear to Him ; the path which He was to tread through rejection, humiliation, and death, to the throne of His glory, becoming more and more distinct, as He realizes that the redemption of man is to be worked out by His own absolute self-renunciation, that the Kingdom of God is to be set

up on the foundation of pure self-sacrificing love ; that the Eternal Holiness and the Eternal Love of the Father is to be manifested in His Life, and in His death. Now, if that "self-emptying" of which I tried to speak in my last sermon is a fact, if the Son of God could, and did, lay aside His Divine attributes, if He could, and did, veil His Divine glory, even from Himself, and, as man, encounter and vanquish the enemy of man, then we can understand how sublime was the confidence, how perfect the obedience, how transcendent the faith in the Father, which could resolve to carry out such a plan as this, to overcome the force of evil by humility and love, to establish a supreme dominion over the hearts, the consciences, the minds of men, by absolute self-renunciation ; to raise the cross from the token of uttermost ignominy, to be the rallying point, the hope, the glory of the world. Oh, try to realize how such an idea would have appeared to men before the Incarnation, before—

" . . . the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the Creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds."

How utterly absurd, how desperate, how hopeless, to dare to cope with human wickedness on earth, with spiritual wickedness in high places, with weapons such as these.

This is the task, this is the work, which is revealed with growing distinctness to the Mind of our Master.

But, then, humanly speaking, to become an abiding purpose, settled, fixed, immovable, this Divine idea

must meet opposition, must be encountered by other ideas, must be contrasted with other plans, other methods, other ways. He must be tempted by them ; He must feel their attractiveness ; He must choose ; He must learn obedience ; He must be made perfect through suffering. How could the Evil One have tempted Jesus with more profound subtlety, than by first representing to Him the amazing nature of the end to be attained by such means as He was relying on ; the utter hopelessness of success, the certainty of failure ; and then suggesting the thought, "Is it not possible that you may be mistaken in supposing that this is the Will of God ?" so like the old insinuation in Eden. "Yea, hath God said, are you *quite* sure, that you understand that Will aright ? Is there no other way more reasonable, more hopeful, more likely to command success ?"

The Son of man must make His choice between the two ideals—the Divine ideal, the ideal of perfect self-sacrifice, culminating in the cross ; the human ideal, attractive, specious, plausible, but of the earth earthy.

Surely here is the true key to the threefold temptations ; they are addressed to Jesus as the Messiah, they represent a lower ideal of the Messiah's mission and work, and the method of carrying out that work ; they correspond, I think, very strikingly to the popular Jewish ideas of what Messiah was to be. Certainly this is the case with the two last (taking St. Luke's order), the promise of the sovereignty of the world, on condition of adopting worldly methods for securing it. This answers to the popular expecta-

tion of a political Messiah, who was to put Himself at the head of the Jewish people, deliver them from the yoke of Rome, bring the nations of the world under His sway, and make Jerusalem the centre of a universal empire. And again, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence, prove Thyself to be the Messiah by performing, in the face of the assembled people, a miracle so evident, so convincing, that no one in his senses can question Thy claim to be indeed the chosen of God, the Lord's anointed." Does not this correspond to that often expressed craving of the Jewish people, which our Lord always steadily refused to gratify—the craving for some sign from heaven, some sign whose meaning it would be impossible to mistake, some miracle which *would compel* belief? "The Jews seek after a sign." And, if this is the case, it is at least probable that the first temptation, "Command that these stones be made bread," should also represent a lower ideal of the Messiah's work; should also have a deeper and wider meaning than has been usually attached to it. The common explanation is familiar to all of us, "You are worn out with your long and weary watch; you are spent with hunger; you are in sore need of bodily refreshment; but if you are indeed what you claim to be, the Son of God, if you do indeed possess Divine powers, make proof of them now, use them now, to appease your hunger, to recruit your exhausted frame; the claims of the body must not be neglected, it cannot surely be wrong, it cannot possibly be a sin to satisfy these

claims, which you can do with a word." And the answer, "Man doth not live by bread alone. There are higher claims upon man than those of the body—the claims of the spiritual life. When the two are in conflict, the lower must yield to the higher. It is the Will of God that I should use these powers, not for Myself, but for the world; and that Will I will obey at any cost. My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me."

Now, without for a moment questioning the truth of this explanation, it surely is legitimate to ask whether this exhausts the meaning of the first temptation. "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasures things new and old." Every diligent student of the New Testament knows how constantly fresh light and new meanings are coming into old familiar passages. The old interpretation does not fully satisfy the conditions of the narrative which implies that our Lord was tempted during the whole period of forty days, and not only at the end; we may therefore fairly study it from the point of view of a lower Messianic ideal.

"If thou art the Son of God command that these stones be made bread."

"You are the Messiah so long expected; you are the deliverer; you are to redeem mankind from the myriad ills under which they are groaning; you are to free them from their hard bondage; you are to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God; you are to be the king of humanity, a king who shall rule

in righteousness ; a prince of peace. Well, then, what better method of establishing your kingdom? What more promising way of securing your sway over the hearts and minds of men? What more likely to succeed than this? Solve the great bread problem. Command these stones to be made bread. Deal successfully with this primary obstacle in the way of the kingdom—the difficulty of securing the means of subsistence. Use these supernatural powers with which you are endowed for the good of humanity ; use them to make bread cheaper, more plentiful, easier for all men to get enough of ; or use them in the evolution of some new cereal which shall yield a crop twice as large as wheat, a crop which will never fail. Do this, and your success is certain ; your empire over men is assured.” Look at this temptation in the light of the miracle of the loaves, as related by St. John, and you will see how plausible it was. Then Jesus Christ did exercise His power in the direction suggested now. He did use it to satisfy the hunger of the people whom He was teaching ; but, as St. John clearly points it, with a higher spiritual end in view, with the object of leading them on to see in Himself the satisfaction of the hunger of their souls. You remember what followed the miracle of the loaves. “Jesus perceived that they would come and take Him by force and make Him a king.” How probable, how natural, that the desire to have Him as their sovereign should find expression as a result of this particular miracle. Cannot we almost hear them saying to one another, these poor people who knew what hunger was, “Ah,

this is the Messiah for us ; one who can give us food at will ; one who can deliver us from all fear of poverty and starvation ; one who will make the struggle for existence less severe, and life more worth living."

"Ah, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, the sign which ought to have helped you to see in the Bread of Life the food of your souls, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled."

And then think how large a part the bread problem has played in the story of the world, how largely hunger has been behind all the great movements of man and many of the crises of history. The struggle for existence has been the cause of all the migrations of old time ; hunger drove the children of Israel into Egypt, famine brought Ruth into the line of the ancestors of Christ. Look again at the Roman Empire ; as long as the Roman Emperors could keep their people supplied with bread, not only their thrones but their popularity was secure. Look at the French Revolution ; the bread problem was the immediate cause of that, and hunger really stormed the Bastille. When we realize all this, when we remember that in our Lord's time famine was a much more frequent and a much more terrible thing than it is now, we may understand better how subtle and how strong the temptation must have been, "Command that these stones be made bread." At first sight it appears so eminently reasonable ; for, as we all know, the difficulty of bringing religion home to what are called the masses is just this, that

the struggle to live, to keep the head above water, often demands all their thought, all their energies, they have no time for the cultivation of the soul. It does seem necessary—does it not?—to bring people up to a certain level of comfort before you can appeal to them as spiritual beings. So we think and so we argue, and the argument seems so plausible, nay, so true. Then, too, think how the temptation must have appealed to the compassionate heart of Jesus. “How hard life is for the many, and you can make it easier, you can, with a word, for ever mitigate that ‘daily scene of sad subjection and of sick routine’ which is the fate of the majority of mankind. You are the Son of God; you have the power to lighten and brighten the lot of the millions of toilers now and in the time to come, will you not use it? Are you bound by the old conditions? Must you let the old struggle go on unrelieved?” It was a subtle appeal to the philanthropy of Jesus—to that love of man which impelled Him to spend His short life on earth going about doing good to the bodies as well as the souls of men, healing their sicknesses, relieving their wants, soothing their sorrows. “Command that these stones be made bread.” It was a plausible, a tempting programme, just the programme for a popular Messiah. But Jesus rejects it unhesitatingly. He shatters its fallacy with the simple and sublime answer, “Man doth not live by bread alone.” Man is a spiritual being, and not only an animal, and the growth of the spiritual life is not really favoured by care and comfort. Shall his animal nature then

be satisfied at the cost of his spiritual life? Perish the thought. Man's life, his true life, is not in the abundance of those things that he possesses. And so Christ refuses to alter the conditions of human society. The redemption of man shall be worked out under the old condition; in the sweat of his brow man must still eat his bread. Christ will not make life easier or more comfortable, though humanity and human compassion urge it never so strongly. He will not accept any short and easy method for the elevation of mankind. He has no sympathy with philanthropy in a hurry. He knows that human comfort may be purchased at too dear a price. He knows that every idea of happiness without holiness is futile and fatuous.

Clear and distinct rings out the eternal principle, "Man doth not live by bread alone." You cannot give man any life which is really worth living unless you minister to his spiritual needs.

Yes, history shows it, experience proves it, every step upward which man has taken has been due to the impulse given to his higher nature by the Spirit of God. It is to the Word of God, touching with living fire the soul of man, that we owe all that is best in modern civilization, the noblest art, the most inspiring poetry. It is the Spirit of Christ softening and freeing the spirit of man which has given birth to the splendid organization for the relief of human suffering and human want in hospital and orphanage and home, of which we are so justly proud. The Church has been true to the example of her Lord

and true to the teaching of experience, when she begins with missions rather than charities ; when she leaves the serving of tables to give herself to the ministry of the Word by which man lives. For it is religion that brings civilization, grace that brings culture, and redemption that gives the first impetus to charities, hospitals, and education.

And yet how startling is the contrast between the attitude of Christ towards this question and the attitude of the modern reformer. Philanthropy abounds—thank God for it—but is it philanthropy quite after the Mind of Christ ? It cares for the bodies, but does it care for the souls ? It spends itself in well-meant efforts to improve the material condition of the people, and God forbid that we should grudge them ; but it does not, generally speaking, appeal to them as spiritual beings. It hopes much from science and culture ; it spares nothing for the advance of secular education ; it builds people's palaces, where religion is tabooed. And yet, all the while, it has, I think, an uneasy feeling that all this does not and will not quite answer the purpose ; there is an undertone of disappointment. Hark to the cynical expression of it, which finds utterance now and again—

“Take gold, disperse the rich man's store ;
Take it and satisfy your need.
Then misbeget some millions more
For our posterity to feed.”

Yes, philanthropy will have to put itself to school with Christ ; it will have to learn from Him that we must

touch the soul if we are to alter the mode of living, for you cannot, as a brilliant writer has said, change the fate of man by embellishing his material dwelling. "Man doth not live by bread alone." And the religious world, which professes and calls itself Christian, how does it stand this test of Christ practically? Is religion, is the spiritual life the supreme thing with us? What about the education of children? which is most thought of, the secular or the religious side of it? What are we most anxious for—that the child shall be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, or that he shall get on well in the world? Is the young man with brains encouraged to take Orders, or to go into some profession, where his cleverness will pay? Or look at the great factories, with their thousands of hands—what provision do Christian employers of labour make for the spiritual wants of the working-man? Do they remember, as they pay him his wages, that "Man does not live by bread alone"?

Oh, let us bring the question home to ourselves, we, who recognize the truth of the great principle, that happiness without holiness is futile. Is religion supreme in our eyes? Have we learnt this first lesson of Jesus Christ, the first word of His ministry, the keynote of His Life, the first principle of His Kingdom? Is the root of the matter in me? Am I really a Christian? Am I following Christ in placing duty, conscience, my soul, first, and inclination, pleasure, profit, second. Or, short of that, do I long for purity? Do I wish for holiness? Do I want to be Christlike? Or, am I sacrificing honesty for filthy

lucre in business? Am I making truth subordinate to self-interest? Am I surrendering purity for the sake of self-indulgence?

To be a Christian really, and not only in name, is not an easy thing; but it is a much simpler thing than people think. The question is not what do I know, what do I believe, what do I profess, but what am I? Have I accepted God's offer of forgiveness in Christ? Am I striving to be loyal to Christ? Am I taking Christ's aim in life as my own aim? Is His Example, His Life, His Death, the inspiring motive of my life? Am I really looking to Him and trusting to Him to be my stay in temptation, my comfort in trouble, my hope in death? If so, I am a Christian.

IX.

OUR LORD'S TEMPTATIONS (III.).

“ And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, ‘ All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘ Get thee behind Me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’ ”—
ST. LUKE iv. 5—8.

I HAVE adopted the order of the two last temptations given in St. Luke's Gospel, because it seems to present the three temptations as an ascending climax in a way which commends itself to the universal conscience more than that of St. Matthew. St. Luke, writing later than St. Matthew, writing probably for Gentile converts, and so for the world at large, sees in that attempt to induce the Son of God to presume upon His close and intimate relation with the Father, a temptation of a character even more subtle than either of the preceding, and therefore puts it last. Body, mind, spirit, is his order. While to St. Matthew, writing primarily for the Jews, the kingdom of Messiah, and its establishment on earth, is naturally the subject of the first importance ; and

his account fittingly culminates with the temptation which we are about to consider. The difficulty involved in the different order ceases, if, following St. Luke, we suppose that our Lord was continuously tempted during the forty days, and that the record in the Gospels is the summary of temptations which were allowed again and again to cross and recross the Mind of Christ, as the spirit of evil strove to divert Him from His purpose by painting alluring pictures of Messiah's work, which seemed to promise a successful issue so much more speedy and so much more certain than that which the Father had marked out for Him, the way of renunciation, the way of the cross. For I must again express my own conviction that the deepest meaning of the temptations is to be found, when we regard them as representing popular ideas or ideals of the Messiah's work, suggested to our Lord in the most plausible, specious, and attractive form, in order that, as Son of man, He may freely make His choice between them and the Divine idea.

From this point of view the first temptation comes to our Lord under the disguise of an appeal to His pity and compassion, to adopt an easy and speedy way of establishing His kingdom on earth, by using His Divine powers in mitigating the severity of the struggle for existence, in solving the bread problem. Let us look now at the second temptation. I think we shall find, when we look a little below the surface, that it was as plausible, as alluring, and as artfully disguised as the first.

All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are conjured up before the eye of Christ. We do not know, we need not inquire how, but a vision is presented to Him, a vivid picture is drawn for Him of the civilized world ; all the myriad activities of human life pass before His gaze like some grand panorama ; all that man had done, was doing, and, may we not even say, was yet to do, in obedience to the Divine command, "Replenish the earth and subdue it ;" the developments of commerce, the achievements of science, the triumphs of art, the glories of literature, the unceasing progress of invention ; and as He contemplates the dazzling vision, how profound the impression made upon His soul of man's marvellous powers, his wonderful energy, his amazing versatility, his boundless resources, the almost infinite capabilities of the human mind ! And, as He gazes, the whisper of the Tempter is heard. "Look, all this may be yours, all these manifold activities of human life may be moulded by you. You may, if you will, at once ascend the throne of the world, and commence your reign of righteousness and peace. You have only to put out those powers with which you are endowed, to bring all this under your beneficent sway, to direct all these glorious powers, all these great capacities into their right channels, and make them minister to the glory of God, instead of the pride of man."

Must it not have come to Him in some such form as this? Of this at least we may be certain, that the temptation could not have been directed to the personal ambition of Jesus ; the mere glitter and

glamour of royalty could have had no attraction to Him, the appeal could not have been made to any love of power for its own sake, for what would have tempted minds of coarser mould, would have had no influence upon the pure soul of Jesus Christ. No, we must look deeper than this for the true motive of this device. Was it not, like the first, an appeal to the sympathy of the Son of man? "Look again at this bright vision of the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, at this grand fabric of man's genius and energy and resource. What is behind it? Unceasing toil, and suffering, and misery, and woe. It is built upon a foundation of human tears and blood. The kingdoms of this world are established and supported by violence and force, the splendid powers of man are wasted and misused, prostituted to the vilest purpose. Yes, and to produce these great results which dazzle the imagination, three parts of the world are groaning in anguish of spirit and hard bondage. See how the strong and powerful are raising themselves by trampling down the poor and the weak—ah, the fair picture has a dark background, which fills the pitiful heart of the Son of man with infinite compassion—and then look on down the centuries and see how this will go on, this violence, this tyranny, this oppression, this waste of human life, this misuse of human energies. What ages it must be before your plan of subduing mankind by the power of love and self-sacrifice can make any real impression on the pride and selfishness, the lust of power, the love of ease which

reigns everywhere triumphant ; how slow, how imperceptible is the progress of the new ideal, how piteous the cry of the true-hearted servants, as in every age they strive, seemingly in vain, to stem the flood of evil. How long, O Lord, how long ! And you can change all this if you will. You can shorten these ages of suffering ; you have the power, if only you will use it, to overthrow the Empire of Rome, and seat yourself on the throne of the Cæsars, not for the gratification of your own ambition, oh no, but, to realize and fulfil the old prophecies, of a king who shall rule in righteousness, who "shall keep the simple folk by their right, defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer ; who shall deliver the poor when he crieth, the needy also, and him that hath no helper."

And then would pass before the Mind of Christ a vivid picture of this beneficent kingdom, Himself all powerful ; a perfect legislation is inaugurated, oppression has ceased, and tyranny ; men have begun to "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, neither do they learn war any more."

And to carry out this attractive programme, He had only to adopt the popular Messianic idea. He had only to proclaim Himself as the long-expected King of the house of David, to put Himself at the head of the Jewish people, to be welcomed with acclamation, to carry all before Him. And can we not imagine how the Evil One, who knows so well how to quote Holy Scripture for his own purpose, would have

pressed home his temptation by a further appeal to Hebrew prophecy; did it not expressly foretell and sanction the use of the means which he is suggesting? Is it not written of Messiah, "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty;" "Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Such must have been, I think, the character of this second temptation, a temptation disguised in the most subtle manner, addressed, like the first, to the compassion of Jesus Christ, backed by the argument from Hebrew prophecy, a temptation to assume at once, and by the exercise of His supernatural powers, the sovereignty for which He was destined; to seat Himself at once on the throne of the world by His right, *in order that* He might cut short the reign of violence and force, and usher in the kingdom of righteousness, the Kingdom of God. And the price to pay? "All these things will I give thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me, do homage to me." What does this mean? It means, surely, when we read between the lines, that our Lord saw through the temptation at once. He saw the hook so artfully concealed behind the glittering bait held out to Him. He saw that to adopt this short and easy method of establishing His Kingdom, was really to adopt the method of this world, and that was, in one word, *to use force*. Disguise it how you will, frame it in the bright setting of just and equal laws, tyranny overthrown, a happy and prosperous people, there was no escaping the conclusion. To do this, you must use force, you must

fall in with popular ideas, you must do evil that good may come, you must sanction the maxim that the end justifies the means. And would not that have been virtually to pay homage to the Prince of this world, and forswear His allegiance to the King of Heaven, Whose Name is Love, for the kingdoms of this world are based on force, but the Kingdom of Heaven is to rest on love.

See, then, the essence of this second temptation. The first had been in effect, make men more comfortable, and then you will be able to make them more religious ; not so, said our Lord, "Man doth not live by bread alone." The Divine order is, "Seek first the Kingdom of God."

The second would be, "You want to set up the Kingdom of God on earth ? Then use the only means which are possible or conceivable ; crush out by force all that is opposed to, all that interferes with, the realization of this noble object. Surely you can do more for the world by living for it than by dying for it."

Not so, is the answer of Jesus. This would be to fight God's battle with the weapons of this world ; this would be to substitute for the Kingdom of God a mere kingdom of this world ; this would be really to serve the purpose of the prince of this world. And it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." And the purpose of God is that the redemption of man shall be worked out not by the use of force, not by any sudden revolution, any violent change in the constitution of

society, but by the influence of a new ideal of life and character slowly and gradually leavening the world. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

And so the second temptation strikes another great keynote in the life of Christ, and embodies another great principle of the religion of Christ. He will overcome opposition not by grasping at power, but by the renunciation of power. He will not extort a forced homage or a grudging obedience; He will have loyal and willing subjects or none. There shall be attraction but not compulsion in the Kingdom of God. See how the principle runs like a golden thread through His life, from the amazing condescension of the Birth at Bethlehem to the crowning glory of the Cross. Never will He use His power save for the relief of human suffering. Never will He claim it for Himself. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

He will never use the world's weapons, either in His own interest or the interests of His Kingdom.

It is just this refusal to yield to the popular cry, just this refusal to play the part of a political and worldly Messiah that exasperated the Jews against Him. They would have hailed Him king with enthusiasm if He had consented to do so; they crucified Him because He refused. Yes, and it was just this steady adhesion to His own divine programme, this deliberate choice of the way of the cross, which tried most severely the allegiance of His

own disciples. To the last they could not understand it, they could not rise to it. Yes, to a St. Peter the idea of a self-renunciation even unto death on the part of the Christ seemed an impossible, an unworthy thing; a thing so inconceivable that even he can play the part of the tempter, to dissuade Him from the Passion and the Death, and urge his Master to abandon His purpose. "Be it far from Thee: this shall not be unto Thee." Yes, he too, though all unconsciously, was doing the devil's work, and brought upon himself the devil's rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." For Jesus sees in this a temptation of precisely the same kind as that to which He had been exposed at the outset of His ministry, a temptation to surrender the Divine method for the human. How startling, how significant it is to find that a truly Satanic temptation can issue from the lips of one's best friend!

Mark how this great keynote of the life of our Master, which is struck in the second temptation, and is seen vibrating through His whole ministry, is caught up by St. Paul in that glowing sentence which contains the concentrated essence of Christianity, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil by good." Do not use force to overcome evil, overcome it with good.

(This is the great Christian principle which, I take it, is embodied in this temptation. Wherever this golden rule has been departed from, wherever it has been violated, however plausible may have been the

excuse, however laudable the object in view, there the Mind of Christ has been departed from, there the method of the world has been preferred to the method of Christ. Whenever, on the plea of advancing the cause of Christ, or promoting the interests of religion, compulsion of any sort or description has been employed; wherever in matters of conscience the policy of coercion has been adopted instead of persuasion; wherever and whenever the attempt has been made to recommend religion to men by any other means than the attraction of the truth and the beauty of holiness, the motive may have been right, but the means used have been wrong and false to the Mind of Jesus Christ.

The history of Christ's Church is strewn with failure due to the neglect of this great principle; for the Christian Church has constantly yielded to this temptation which the Christ rejected. Zealous she has been, no doubt, for what she thought was the extension of her Master's Kingdom. Eager to see the city of God set up on earth, again and again she has been unable to resist the temptation to compel men to come in by force. Again and again has she failed, and failed grievously, to see that, in her conflict with evil, the weapons of her warfare must not be carnal.

Was she not using carnal weapons, was she not adopting the methods of the world when, in her zeal for orthodoxy, for right belief, she forgot the pre-eminence of Christian charity, and thought to check the spread of wrong belief by imprisoning, torturing,

and burning wrong believers? I often wonder, as I read the history of the Church, whether, if orthodoxy had been warmed a little more by Christian charity, there would ever have been heretics to punish at all; whether they might not all have been won back by the spirit of love.

It was when the great Nestorian controversy was at its height that a priest of the Church of Alexandria paid a visit to the great heretic, hoping to be a mediator of peace. It was too late to effect a reconciliation; but how powerful was the influence of kindness and love we see by the last letter which Nestorius wrote to Cyril. "Nothing is of more power," he writes, "than Christian gentleness. By this man's might I have been conquered; for I confess that I am seized with great fear when I perceive in any man the spirit of Christian gentleness. It is as if God dwelt in him."

The Church was doubtless animated in her treatment of heretics and misbelievers by zeal for the honour of God and the good of souls. She honestly thought that wrong opinion must be crushed out by force, for fear the poison should infect the flock of Christ; and it is because she yielded to this temptation of the Evil One that the pages of her history are stained and blackened by the horrors of the Inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the fires of Smithfield. I do not say that the Church has been always responsible for measures such as these; but they were done in the name of Christianity, in the interests of religion. How do they look in the light

of the Life of Christ? How do they stand the test of His apostle's teaching, "Overcome evil with good"? We are reaping to-day the fruits of this worldly policy in the divisions of Christendom.

I verily believe that the truest answer to the question, Why is the Church, the Body of Christ, split up to-day into innumerable sects? is this: Because she has been so slow to learn her Master's lesson that force is no remedy where conscience is concerned, no remedy for difference of opinion in religion.

And if the Church of England is ever again to be in fact, as well as in idea, the church of the nation, if ever she is to win back the children who have left her, she will do so not for any social advantages she may have to offer, not because she has a great historic past to look back upon, not even for the superior attractions of her worship, but because in her, in her clergy and her people will be seen in fuller measure the graces of the Christian character; because, having learnt more of the Mind of Christ, she has begun to reflect something of the charity and the long-suffering of Christ. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." That is the motto of the Church, as it was of her Head. Who would wish or hope for reunion, on any other condition than this?

This is a matter which concerns us all. The Church is made up of individuals. Public opinion, which is the public conscience, is gradually raised by the influence of individuals.

Oh, have we any sympathy with the work of Jesus Christ, have we any interest in the extension of His

Kingdom? Do we look beyond our own souls and their salvation? Do we look out with wistful eyes as He looked on the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, and long that they may be brought under the loving rule of Christ? Are we touched as He was touched, by the thought of the miseries of men, the waste of human energies and power, the hopeless lives of the millions who know not God? Do we really believe that the Spirit of Christ, if He could but have free scope among men, could do for them what legislation, social reforms, mere philanthropy can never do?

If we are so touched, if we do adopt His method, learn in His school, renounce as He renounced, the use of force in religion, in social life, in business; renounce the devil and all his works, renounce intolerance, retaliation, recrimination, bitterness, prejudice, self-assertion; win men by kindness, conquer by gentleness, disarm by love, so, and so only, can we be fellow-workers with Him in the redemption of the world.

Note.—A sermon on the Third Temptation, belonging to this course, has unfortunately been lost.

AMOS AND HOSEA.

X.

AMOS.

“Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”—AMOS v. 24.

ONE of the ablest of our Oxford professors, preaching in the University Church a few Sundays ago, expressed himself very hopefully on the subject of the Old Testament generally. He said, “We are not yet agreed about it; but I do not think it is being too sanguine to feel that we are drawing nearer to the understanding of its secret. We are beginning to feel the warmth and the life and the reality come back to those pale and shadowy figures. Isaiah and Hosea and Jeremiah no longer walk in a *limbus patrum*; but we see them as they were, among the forces by which they were actually surrounded; we see what they were as men; we see what they were as exponents of a message from God; we see the grand and glorious ideas which stirred within them in all their richness and fulness.”

Sympathizing as I do most heartily with this belief and this hope, I have ventured to take as my subjects

for this and my next sermon, two of those figures, who to many of us, I feel, are still somewhat pale and shadowy—the prophets Amos and Hosea—and to make a very humble attempt to bring back into them a little life and warmth and reality.

I think it is, perhaps, a pity that, when our Lectionary was revised, Amos was not given his proper position in the Sunday Lessons; it is a pity that he should be made to follow, instead of precede Hosea, as historically he most certainly did. I need make no apology, therefore, for taking Amos first.

Let us look at the man first—the man whose first appearance as a prophet is one of the most striking and picturesque scenes in Hebrew history. Who is he, this strange figure, that we can so easily picture to ourselves, standing forth, fearlessly exposing the corruptions of society and the hypocrisy of the national religion, in the very sanctuary of that religion itself; fearlessly proclaiming the Divine judgment which is hanging over the heads of king and people? "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive out of their own land." 1. Who is he? He tells us himself who he is. "I am no prophet; I am not one of the sons of the prophets." He does not belong to one of those guilds or associations which went by the name of the "Sons of the prophets," the members of which seem to have lost their first faith, their early zeal and inspiration; had become merely professional men who made prophesying a trade, and had become the scorn of earnest true-hearted men. Amos has no

connection with these degenerate prophets, he indignantly repudiates the imputation ; he is not even an Israelite, a member of the northern kingdom ; he is a native of Judah ; his home was in the little town of Tekoa, a few miles south of Bethlehem ; his occupation the very humble one of a shepherd on the neighbouring hills, and a cultivator of sycamore figs—the coarser and least desirable of the fruits of Canaan. His position, that is to say, was hardly above that of a common labourer ; but, strange to say, he was no unlettered clown, as the old commentators supposed. He was familiar with the history of his own nation and the neighbouring states ; he had an intimate knowledge of what was going on in Damascus and Tyre, in Moab and Edom ; he knew about the movements of the peoples ; he knew that the Philistines came from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir, as well as that Israel had been redeemed from Egypt ; he thoroughly understood the politics of his age, and he was keenly alive to the social and religious condition not only of his own country, but of the northern kingdom too. And yet, is it so very surprising when we come to think of it ? Lowly pursuits do not necessarily involve ignorance or indifference to higher things. Amos was free probably from some of the degrading and debasing influences which weigh down our own working classes. He was doubtless accustomed to repair to the capital for the religious festivals ; there he would use his tongue, his ears, his eyes. He had little or no access perhaps to books ; but are not books and

newspapers sometimes a hindrance rather than a help to real thought? Do we not often get our thinking done for us in and by them? In the East, as a modern writer has observed, "shrewd observation, a memory retentive of traditional law, and the faculty of original reflection took the place of laborious study." It is not, therefore, so strange as we might at first sight suppose, that this shepherd of Tekoa, who, peasant though he was, must have been a man of an original mind, unsophisticated, true-hearted, clear-sighted, should have retained in his memory all that he had heard, that he should have thought out for himself some of the great questions of the day, as he kept his long watches on the lonely hills of Judah, for there is no necessity to suppose, as some have supposed, that this historical and political knowledge was given him by Divine revelation. It seems to me that such an explanation of it is just one of the things which helps to make these Old Testament characters shadowy and unreal. We lose touch with them; we lose interest in them; they cease to be human; they cease to be men of like passions with ourselves, and there is no cause. We have proof enough, if we will only search the Scriptures, of the Divine inspiration of the prophets, without trying to extend that inspiration to knowledge which could quite well be acquired without it.

Amos was a clear-sighted, sagacious, and thoughtful man; but he was much more than this. He was a man, like our own Bishop Butler, with an awful sense of religion, a man who lived in close and constant

communion with God ; and a man, therefore, who studied these topics of the day, these political, social, and religious questions, in the light of God, and submitted them all to the test of the Divine righteousness.

Amos was a prophet ; because, as one has well said, "a prophet was a man who knew the character of the true and living God ; and because he knew and loved Him, and was living with Him, he made other men know Him, and understand Him too." Amos knew the character of the true and living God, and was living with Him. And as he follows his flock in the wilderness of Judæa, brooding over these problems, filled with a divine impatience, a divine indignation against the thoughtlessness, and frivolity, and irreligion of his time, longing to deliver his soul ; while he is thus musing the fire kindled, a Divine word comes to him, "Go prophesy unto My people Israel." "Not merely go and utter predictions, go and foretell events which are to happen ; not this only or primarily, but go and foretell what you have heard and learnt from Me ; go and deliver My message to the conscience of Israel. Go and reveal to them those eternal principles of righteousness which I have revealed to you. Go and show them how their religion, their politics, their social relations, look in the light of these principles. Go and proclaim the sure and inevitable consequences of the neglect and violation of these Divine laws. Go and announce the near approach of judgment."

So it must have come to Amos, this message from

the Eternal. He is sure that God has spoken to him, he cannot escape the responsibility; a necessity is laid upon him, the Divine impulse is irresistible. So they all felt, these prophets of Israel, "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy."

And so we find him, armed with no other credentials than that the word of Jehovah burned within him, standing forth in the midst of the brilliant crowd that thronged the royal sanctuary at Bethel, to proclaim what Jehovah had spoken against the children of Israel; then, when everything was lawless life and boisterous joy, to announce a near and inevitable destruction as a Divine necessity. Why lawless life and boisterous joy? 2. To understand why, we must try and realize a little the condition of the kingdom, and the state of society. The time was the first half of the reign of Jeroboam II., practically the last king of the house of Jehu, for his son reigned but six months, and after him the deluge—as you will see, if you read the history in the Kings. The historian tells us but little about Jeroboam II., but that little is very significant. "He restored," we are told, "the coast of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the plain." That is to say, that in the reign of this sovereign the territories of Israel were extended even beyond the limits which they had reached in the palmiest days of Solomon; this fact, and the allusions which run all through the Book of Amos, prove conclusively that the northern kingdom at this epoch was at the very zenith of power, wealth, security, and luxury. And yet we know that, in the

reign of this king's grandfather, Jehoahaz, the nation had been reduced to such terrible straits that the once mighty kingdom of Israel could put but fifty horsemen and ten chariots into the field; for, the narrative goes on, "The King of Syria had destroyed them, and made them like the dust." The reason of this surprising change in the fortunes of Israel is obvious enough, it is implied in that last sentence. Syria of Damascus—the Syrian confederacy whose centre was Damascus—the northern neighbour of Israel, had always been a thorn in her side, had always been her most dangerous rival. Again and again we read of war between Syria and Israel, and constantly we hear of Israel's getting the worst of it; but now the old enemy of Israel has ceased to be formidable, Damascus is itself engaged in a life and death struggle with the great world-power whose capital was at Nineveh, the great world-power of Assyria, which is slowly, but surely, drawing nearer and nearer to the Holy Land, of which Damascus is the key. But at this crisis Damascus is acting as a breakwater to Israel, and keeping out the great flood of Assyrian invasion, which is destined later on—and Amos saw it, though he does not name Assyria—to submerge the land of Jehovah. Meanwhile Israel is respite; she has breathing time. She is free from hostile attack, and she has made the most of it. She has largely extended her territories; she has developed her resources. She is prosperous, rich, and powerful; the times are times of peace. Trade is good; money is plentiful; the country is sunning

itself, so a superficial observer would think, and so the people themselves believed, under the special favour of Jehovah. But Amos sees below the surface, and he tells us in very plain language what he sees—the usual consequences of very good times. The upper classes, who have grown suddenly rich, have given themselves up to unbridled sensuality and self-indulgence; “They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; they eat the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall.” Drunkenness is rampant, even among the women, “They drink wine in bowls,” “the kine of Bashan,” as the prophet calls them, who say to their lords, “Bring, and let us drink.” Amongst the trading classes there is that race for wealth, that impatience to get rich, which we are not unfamiliar with in other times, and in other lands; that feverish thirst for gold, which frets at every restraint upon it, and says, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great.” How clearly we see it all—the short weight, the hard bargains, the sharp practice of the merchants and tradesmen.

But, if this is a true picture of the upper and middle classes, we hardly need to be told that the poor had a bad time of it. Luxury, extravagance, money-grubbing, are always followed by oppression of the poor, by hard-hearted rapacity, by miscarriage of Justice. And so it was in Samaria. “They tread upon the poor, and take from him

presents ; they afflict the just ; they take bribes ; they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right ; they sell them the refuse of the wheat ;" they gamble and drink with the spoils of the poor, even at the very sanctuary of God. They anticipate the modern sweater, when "They buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes." And then, to make the picture complete, we hear of something which sounds not unlike strikes, commotions, and disturbances already beginning to take place in the capital. When Amos cries, "Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and oppressions in the midst thereof." Such is a sketch of the picture which Amos gives us of the social conditions of Samaria. And what of its religious state ? Well, we know that, from the very beginning, the religion of Jehovah had assumed a debased and degraded form in the northern kingdom, when the first Jeroboam established the calves at Bethel and Dan ; and there can be little doubt that this worship became still more corrupted as time went on, by idolatrous and heathenish elements. Yet it was nominally the worship of Jehovah, and the men of Samaria prided themselves on being the people of Jehovah, on enjoying His favour ; and never had His worship been more zealously and assiduously carried on. Sacrifices, tithes, oblations, streamed into the sanctuaries ; there were hosts of people who were most diligent in attending the feasts, and observing the fasts, and bringing their offerings, in preserving all the old traditions, who

were actually looking forward to that Day of the Lord, which to the prophets was always a day of judgment, thinking that they at least would reap the reward of their zealous serving, though others might be destroyed. "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord, to what end is it for you?" cries Amos, "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light, even very dark, and no brightness in it?" Yes, it is this blind, loveless self-righteousness, this Pharisaism, this mere ritualism, this worship from which the true spirit of religion had fled, that calls for the most scathing condemnation from the peasant prophet. "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply your transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days. For this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God." "I hate, I despise your feast days. I will smell no sweet savour in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt offerings, I will not accept them." Your worship is all a mockery and a sham; there is no penitence and no righteousness. You have silenced the prophets; you have commanded the prophets' saying, "Prophecy not." You have divorced religion from morality. Therefore, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

3. Into the very heart of this luxurious and corrupt society, into the royal sanctuary of Bethel itself, as we have seen, comes Amos of Tekoa, in his rough shepherd dress, with his rough peasant speech, and

delivers Jehovah's message to Jehovah's apostate children, a message of judgment, sure and near. (How much of his prophecy he actually spoke, how far the symbolism which he used was intelligible to the audience, we cannot say, but at least the last words were plain enough, "The sanctuary of Israel shall be laid waste and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." They were so plain and so menacing that the priest Amaziah takes alarm, and sends word to the king, accusing Amos of treason and conspiracy against the government.) "Amos hath conspired against thee, the land is not able to bear all his words." And then he turns to the prophet, this sleek and worldly priest, who had long lost all earnestness and sincerity himself, and pretended at least to disbelieve the existence of it in any one else. He affects to treat Amos as if he were one of those professional prophets who made a trade of prophesying, half fanatic, half intriguer, who was making a bold bid for notoriety, in the hope that the court might buy him off. "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Bethel, for it is a royal sanctuary and a national temple." (Then follows the prophet's indignant disclaimer of the priestly insinuation, a solemn repetition of his prediction of judgment, which would fall with special weight upon the family of the priest himself, "and Israel shall surely go into captivity out of his land." What took place after this we are not told.) Amos doubtless had to yield to superior force.

Most likely he made his escape back to his own country, where he placed on record the words of Jehovah, which the house of Israel refused to hear or to heed.

4. Now, may I call your attention very briefly to a few of the leading ideas of Amos, ideas most of which are far and away above the ordinary level of the thought of his age, and must have come from God. And, first, he has a firm grasp on that truth which Israel as a people always failed to reach up to, the truth that Jehovah is not the God of Israel only, but the God of all the other nations, He is the supreme ruler of the universe. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" What a thing to say to proud exclusive Israel. Amos sees Jehovah behind the movements of the nations. "Did I not bring up the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir (in Mesopotamia), as well as Israel out of Egypt?" Yes, and upon the conscience of all these nations, as well as upon that of Israel, Jehovah has impressed certain simple laws of morality. If these are violated, whether by the nations or by Israel, punishment will be inflicted by Jehovah on all alike. The heathen nations are to be judged not because they do not worship Israel's God, but because they have broken the laws of universal morality. This is why Amos begins his prophecy with the judgment which is to fall upon the nations. This is the meaning of that constantly repeated burden, "For three transgressions and for four," of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, and others. They are punished, you will

observe, for cruelty and barbarity ; for violating the universal laws of humanity ; but then he works up, with a most dramatic and unexpected climax, to Judah and Israel. Yes, they have sinned like the heathen ; they will be punished like the heathen. God makes no excuses, He is no respecter of persons. But, have we then no privileges—are we not specially Jehovah's people ? Such might be the natural plea of the Israelite. Yes, says Amos, “ I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness.” “ You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” you do stand in a peculiar relation to me. But, what then ? You are my people in a sense in which no other is, “ *therefore* will I punish you for all your iniquities.” Just because you are Jehovah's people, because you have received such special marks of His favour and His love, will He punish you, for this only makes your responsibility greater and the judgment upon you more certain and severe. Yes, you, and others through you, must learn that eternal lesson, that greater privilege brings greater responsibility. And again, if you point to the crowded temple, to the smoking altars, if you plead that you do serve Jehovah so zealously, so assiduously, that your tithes and your offerings are so punctual and so regular, know that all this splendid ceremonial is useless, nay, loathsome to Jehovah, while it is linked with immorality, injustice, inhumanity. What then does Jehovah want ? you ask. “ Seek the Lord and ye shall live.” Seek Me. Yes, that is what He wants. Know Him, understand His character, His

Will, and you will see that what Jehovah wants is sincerity rather than sacrifice, righteousness before ritual. "Let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a never dying stream."

This is the key to the book, this is the core of the prophecy. (Amos does not denounce the worship of Israel because it is a degraded form of religion, not because it is calf worship (like his successor Hosea), not because it is schismatical, not this mainly or primarily, but because it is offered by unrighteous and immoral worshippers, because it gives positive encouragement to the injustice, the sensuality, the barbarous treatment of the poor, which are the crying sins of Israel. The keynote of Amos is righteousness, the keyword of Hosea is love.)

5. Lastly, Amos feels that the corruption of society has gone so deep, that there is no hope of reform, no hope of averting the judgment; his inspired gaze can see what Israel is too blinded to see—the shadow of the coming doom lengthening out. He can see the armies of Assyria drawing nearer to the devoted land, he knows that the old religious enthusiasm of Israel is gone beyond recall, the old hardihood of simpler days has been sapped by luxury and sensuality. What is there left which can stand against the onset of the legions of the Great King? Israel is doomed. "Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth."

Yes, Israel is doomed. But then, just when you least expect it, the prophet's tone changes; out of

the depths of despair he rises to the most confident hope. The judgment is not final, it is remedial. Like Isaiah, like all the prophets, "Zion shall be redeemed by judgment," only the chaff, the worthless mass, will be destroyed, the good grain, the righteous, will be saved. It is indestructible. Jehovah scatters Israel, and He will do so, but He can also bring them back with the same ease. The dark night of judgment is succeeded by the bright dawn of a new day, when Israel, once again a united people, is restored to its land, purified by judgment, and ruled by its old royal house.

Such are some of the leading ideas, very inadequately represented, of the prophet, such is the gist of his message; and though there may be little of distinct prediction in his book, little that directly foreshadows the Christ, does it not bear upon it the evident mark of Divine inspiration, and is it not a message to us, as well as to Israel? And though other prophets have more to teach us than he about the spiritual life; though Christianity may make religion more beautiful and attractive and inspiring, and may supply us with a motive power which Amos cannot, yet he goes to the root of the matter when he makes religion rest upon righteousness. Yes, there may be zeal for religion, there may be delight in it, there may be warm feelings and easily stirred emotions. These may exist, and do exist, with a lax morality and a feeble sense of our duty to our neighbour and our God. Amos teaches, and teaches truly, that there can be no stable religious character which is not built upon the foundation of the moral law.

XI.

HOSEA.

"Let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord."—HOSEA vi. 3 (R.V.).

"For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."—HOSEA vi. 6.

JEROBOAM II., in whose reign Amos delivered his message to Israel, must have been an exceptionally strong man or an exceptionally fortunate man; at any rate, Israel remained powerful and prosperous while he lived, though Amos tells us how, during these palmy times, moral and social corruption was preying on the very vitals of the people. We are not unprepared therefore to hear of the collapse which soon followed the death of Jeroboam. His son Zechariah succeeded him; but in six months he fell a victim to the assassin, and with him fell the house of Jehu, which had reigned in Samaria for more than a hundred years. Israel's short respite was over, the short spell of prosperity came to an end, and the period which follows and covers the last years of the northern kingdom, is as darkened by disasters as the preceding had been brightened by success.

The narrative in the history of the Book of Kings

is little more than a record of treachery, conspiracy, assassination, and usurpation. Some bold adventurer forms a plot, murders the reigning sovereign, seizes the throne, and, after a few years more or less of a reign of terror, he becomes, in his turn, the victim of sedition, and perishes by the hand of the conspirator. Out of six kings who rapidly follow one another, only one dies in his bed and is succeeded by his son. And this man, Menahem, who obtained the crown after a ferocious struggle, finding himself even then somewhat insecure, adopts the fatal policy—the policy of our own British forefathers—of calling to his aid the great king, the king of Assyria, to assist him in making his position good. The great king never lost an opportunity, never rendered a service for nothing. Israel becomes tributary to Assyria, and the foe, whose approach Amos foresaw, has laid his strong hand on Israel, never again to relax his grasp.

Pekah, the son of Remaliah, the last but one of these adventurer sovereigns, was an abler and a stronger man than the rest. He conceived and endeavoured to carry out a really great idea—an idea worthy of a Bismarck or a Napoleon. He formed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the king of Syria, which is known as the Syro-Israelitish League. The two allied powers were to attack the kingdom of Judah, dethrone the reigning sovereign, Ahaz, unite the southern to the northern kingdom under one head, who was to be Pekah himself, in the hope that the united kingdom, in close conjunction with

Damascus, might form a compact and powerful state which would prove a bulwark to Palestine, such as the waves of Assyrian invasion would dash against in vain. It was a great scheme. Isaiah tells us about it in his seventh chapter. It failed, because Ahaz called in the great king to his assistance, and the only result was that Israel was crippled by the loss of a large slice of her northern territory. The last king of Israel bears the same name as her last prophet. He has a better character from the historian than his predecessors, though he, too, has to reckon with Assyria, and to pay his tribute ; but he is eager to cast off the yoke ; he is induced to intrigue with Egypt, a false and fatal policy. Egypt then, as always, proves a broken reed ; no help is given, and Assyrian vengeance soon overtakes the hapless king. He is summoned to answer for his conduct ; he is cast into prison, and disappears from sight in the pathetic words of the prophet, "As for Samaria, her king is cut off like the foam upon the waters." The armies of Assyria overrun the country. Samaria is besieged, and, after a brave and stubborn resistance of three years, it falls, and the kingdom of Israel ceases to be.

It is this last period of Israelite history which is illustrated by Hosea's book, or rather, I should say, by the last eleven chapters. The first three relate to the reign of Jeroboam II., the gala days of the nation, when it was peaceful, wealthy, and prosperous,—“I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” The evils which the prophet fore-

sees and foretells, are all in the future. But from the fourth chapter onwards, we are in the midst of confusion and chaos, the result of the terrible storms which sweep over the nation after Jeroboam's death. Hosea gives us a vivid picture of these troublous times. He tells us of conspiracy, assassination, regicide ; " They have set up kings, but not by Me ; " " All their kings are fallen ; " " They have devoured, or they keep devouring, their judges ; " " By swearing and lying and killing and committing adultery." To the prophet it seems a universal reign of perjury, fraud, violence, and bloodshed. Immoralities of all kinds are rife in private life. Drunkenness, dishonesty, burglary, uncleanness, debauchery, highway robbery ; for " Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding ; " " They break into houses ; " " Troops of robbers wait for a man." In these crimes all classes of society are implicated. Even the priests are accused of murdering and robbing those who came up to worship at the sanctuaries. " The company of priests murder in the way to Shechem, yea, they commit lewdness." " Like people, like priest," says Hosea ; and, this being the case, we need not wonder when we hear a scathing indictment of the religious worship of the time which to the prophet seems nothing but sheer idolatry and licentiousness. " My people ask counsel at their stocks." " Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." We cannot read these chapters of Hosea without seeing that the condition of things is desperate, hopeless ; aye, and the people know it themselves. In their despair they

turn first to one quarter and then to another for assistance, anywhere, everywhere, except to the true source of help, except to Jehovah, by the way of repentance and reformation. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." There was a party in Samaria that wanted to make terms with the king of Assyria, to escape from the doom which was hanging over the head of Israel, by a timely submission and surrender of independence; there was another faction which was intriguing with Egypt, that broken reed, indulging in the vain hope that the great southern power would come at the last moment to the rescue. "Ephraim is like a silly dove, without heart, without understanding; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria."

First one of these parties and then the other is in the ascendant, and they waste what little strength they have left in conspiracy, intrigue, and cabal. The time for repentance and reform is past, says Hosea, the day of grace is gone, the days of visitation are come; the days of recompense are come; the catastrophe cannot long be delayed; "They have sown the wind, they must reap the whirlwind." "Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God, they shall fall by the sword."

Such was the condition of Samaria and its people, when the last, but not the least, of its prophets delivered his message. What an awful, what a heart-breaking time for a prophet to have to live and

labour in, and for a man like Hosea, too ; no stranger like Amos, but one who loved Israel with the love of a true patriot, a man of the deepest and tenderest sympathies, whose affection for his country was only less than his fidelity to Jehovah. Oh, if we could only understand him better. I am sure our own hearts would beat with a little answering sympathy if we could only put ourselves in imagination alongside of this noble, high-souled, tender-hearted man, standing out alone in the midst of this moral chaos, amid sights and sounds which must have shocked and sickened him, lifting his voice and pleading with all the passionate earnestness of his nature, with a people too hardened and callous to heed or even to hear him. For his ministry meets with no response, with nothing but opposition and ridicule. "The prophet is a fool," they say, "the spiritual man is mad," until he himself is almost driven mad by his despair.

Every one who tries to read Hosea is repelled at first by the ruggedness of the style ; it is difficult, it is abrupt, it is obscure. But this is because the prophecy is one long cry of anguish. As the outlook becomes gloomier and gloomier, as the hopelessness of reform is more and more apparent, as the certainty of destruction forces itself upon the prophet's soul, his language reflects his deep emotion, his utterances are broken, his voice is choked with sobs ; sorrow, amazement, indignation, horror, and tenderness escape his lips in rapid and changeful succession. But it is all to no purpose ; there is no

impression made; there is no response; they do not know, they will not know, who their true Saviour is, "O Israel, thy destruction is that thou hast been against Me, against thy help." No, "Like a silly dove they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." It is no wonder that the language is abrupt, the transitions rapid, and the meaning sometimes doubtful; but we may make allowances, may we not, when we realize that this is due to the sympathy of the prophet, a sympathy which makes him feel intensely for and with his people in their desperate plight, but a sympathy which enables him to enter, too, into the feelings of the Divine Father of Israel, to put himself in Jehovah's place, if we may say so, to realize how the ingratitude and apostasy of Israel must affect the God of Israel; for it is a characteristic of this prophet, which some of you may have noticed, to sink his own personality, to identify himself with Jehovah. Only in the first section do we find the familiar words, "Thus saith the Lord." Afterwards, with scarcely an exception, it is Jehovah Himself that we hear pleading and reasoning with Israel; Jehovah Himself denouncing, exhorting, and yearning over His people. But as Hosea draws towards the end of his ministry, he becomes calmer. It is like a peaceful sunset at the close of a stormy day. The doom of Israel is inevitable, but out of the darkness of judgment shines, as in Amos, the bright star of hope. Hosea, too, is confident that the punishment is remedial, that it will purify like fire; he, too, sees that out of the travail pangs of judgment a new people

will be born. The iniquity of Ephraim is boundless, his sin is hid, the sorrows of a travailing woman are come upon him ; but, " I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." And so the tempestuous agitation of the middle section changes to the beautiful, peaceful, and quiet expectation of a regenerate and God-fearing Israel, with which the prophecy closes. " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

If I may speak for myself, I cannot help feeling, when I read the prophecy of Hosea in the light which modern scholarship has thrown upon it, and when I try to realize the condition of things under which he lived and worked, to me there is scarcely a more pathetic incident in all human history than this man, with his heart overflowing with love and tenderness and sympathy, appealing with passionate earnestness to a disobedient and gain-saying people who stopped their ears like the deaf adder and would not hear, pouring out his soul in vain, and making no impression, finding no response, yet never losing faith in God, never losing hope, never yielding to despair. " I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem from death ; O death, where are thy plagues ; O grave, where is thy destruction ? "

If you have followed me so far, you will, I think, be prepared to hear that Hosea penetrates far more deeply than Amos does into the character of God.

He too exhorts Israel to seek the Lord, as Amos did, to know the Lord, His nature, His will, His purpose. There is no knowledge of God in the land. "My people," he says, "are destroyed for lack of this knowledge." "It is time," he says, "to seek the Lord." "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Yes, "to know the Lord;" that is the whole duty of man. "Israel shall say unto Thee, my God, we know Thee." But Hosea does not stop with that knowledge of God which Amos requires, that knowledge of Jehovah as a righteous God, Who requires righteousness and justice in His worshippers. He is not content to cry, with Amos, "Cease your ritual service and do justice;" "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a never dying stream." For him the deepest thing in religion, in life, is the Fatherly love and kindness of Jehovah for Israel His son. He sees that what Jehovah requires from His People is the love of their hearts, in response to the love He has lavished on them. "I desire mercy," *i.e.* kindness, love, "and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." To know Jehovah is to know Him as a tender Father Who, when Israel was a child, loved him, and out of Egypt called His son. A Father Who taught Israel as a child to walk, holding them by their arms, Who drew them to Himself with human cords, with the cords of a man, with the bands of love. It is characteristic of the difference between the two prophets, that in Amos this word mercy, kindness, love, never occurs, while in Hosea it not only expresses the truest, deepest relation of man

to God, but with him love and truth, love and justice, are the whole duty of man. "Sow to yourself in righteousness, reap in mercy or love ;" "Turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment."

Again and again does Hosea appeal to Israel as Jehovah's child, His only son ; but, alas, Israel is an unwise child, a foolish son, who will not listen or respond to the love of his Father. Yes, and to bring out more clearly and distinctly this bond of union between Jehovah and His people, Hosea represents it, you will perhaps remember, in the earlier part of his prophecy, under another figure, the figure of the love of a husband for his unfaithful wife, a love which persists and perseveres in spite of constant and repeated acts of infidelity ; the prophet himself, so it seems, goes through this experience, he himself endures the pangs of unrequited love. Why? What does it mean, that strange story? We have seen that Hosea identifies himself with Jehovah. We have seen that by his intense sympathy, he is able to see things as God sees them, to feel as the Father feels, to put himself in the place of God, and so, by this personal experience of infidelity, he realizes something of what Jehovah feels through the long persistent hopeless infidelity of His people Israel. This is the true key to Hosea. Yes, fidelity to Jehovah, the fidelity of a loving wife to her husband, of a loving child to his father, that is the natural attitude of Israel, that should be the relation of Israel to their God and their Father, Who has loved so tenderly, and borne so patiently with His wilful, disobedient, and rebellious people.

We are almost startled when we see how nearly this prophet of Israel has anticipated the revelation of God in Christ, the teaching of the Gospel on the Fatherhood of God, the doctrine that God is love. "When Israel was a child, I loved him," "I taught him to walk, holding him by the arms." "I drew him by human cords, with the bands of love." Israel is an unwise, a foolish son. Israel must be punished; yes, but it goes to Jehovah's heart, if we may say so, to inflict the punishment. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" It is not a long step from this to the parable of the prodigal son. And when the work of punishment is done, how gladly will He redeem them, and restore them to life and favour again. I will ransom them, I will redeem them. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away."

Does Hosea stand alone among the prophets in this deep insight into the very heart of God? Surely not, though perhaps none of them surpass or even equal him in his power of sympathy, and perhaps no book of the Old Testament is so thoroughly saturated as Hosea with this love of God; but we recall not a few passages of Isaiah where the same note is struck. One I will quote, because it is little known or understood, which shows that Isaiah was at one with our prophet in his knowledge of the character of God. I owe its interpretation to Dr. A. Smith's book on Isaiah. It occurs in chapter xxxi., and was spoken when

Sennacherib was threatening the Holy City, and its fall seemed imminent. "As birds flying," says Isaiah, "so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem." A little more accuracy in the translation brings out the meaning; it should be, "As little mother birds hovering, so will the Lord of Hosts protect Jerusalem."

Do you see the figure? We have been watching in spring the hedge where we know there is a nest. Suddenly the mother bird, who has been sitting on a branch close by, flutters off her perch, passes backwards and forwards with flapping wings, that droop nervously towards the nest, over her young. A hawk is in the sky, and, till he disappears, she will hover, the incarnation of motherly anxiety. This is Isaiah's figure. His native city, which he loved, is again in danger. Sennacherib is descending upon her, and the pity of Isaiah's own heart for her, evil as she was, suggested to him a motherhood of pity in the heart of God. The suggestion God Himself approved. Centuries after, when He assumed our flesh and spoke our language, when He put His love into parables, loving and familiar to our affections, there were none of them more beautiful than that which He uttered over this same city, weeping as He spoke, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not."

So deeply do the prophets of Israel penetrate into the character of God, so do they endeavour to picture it in terms drawn from the most sacred and tender of earthly relationships, so do they tell us there is a

motherhood as well as a fatherhood of pity in the heart of God.

(How truly, and how beautifully, does the teaching of Hosea supplement and complete the sterner doctrine of Amos. Amos confines himself to that eternal truth which is the very foundation of a religious character, that God is righteous, and must have righteousness in His worshippers. He lays bare, with unsparing hand, the hollowness and shams of a religion which thinks to satisfy God with outward forms of worship, while it is all the while transgressing the first principles of morality. He witnesses to one side of the character of God. Hosea, with a deeper insight, a keener sympathy, a tenderer heart, supplies the motive power of religion and of life, when he draws back the veil which hides the face of God, and reveals that truth which is the very life-blood of our Christianity to-day, "that the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.")

XII.

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

“We are ambassadors, therefore, on Christ’s behalf, as though God were intreating by us.”—2 COR. v. 20 (R.V.).

THERE can be no doubt of St. Paul’s theological position ; the Incarnation of Jesus Christ was to him the centre of human history. The Incarnate Christ, living, suffering, dying, rising, reigning, was to him at once the revelation of the character of God—the pledge and assurance of Divine forgiveness—the source of courage, of confidence, and hope—and also the centre of attraction towards Whom would be drawn by the magnetic influence of goodness all the children of God who were scattered abroad in every land and in every age.

“ I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

To St. Paul, too, the method by which the Incarnate life was to be extended, to be realized in the world, to become the centre of attraction to ages yet unborn—to St. Paul, too, this was clear and plain, “To us has the word of reconciliation been committed.” Christ, the Incarnate Christ, has passed into the unseen, where all power has been given to

Him in heaven and earth, but He is present in Spirit here on this earth—where two or three are gathered together there is He. He is working through human instruments. His words must be spoken through human lips. His works must be done through human hands. His influence must be exerted through human lives, through human lives lifted above the standard of the world, through human lives transfigured by His Spirit. Through human lives in which there is manifested a power clearly not of this world, will He draw all men unto Him. The Church continues the work of the Incarnation. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you;" "Ye shall be My witnesses unto the end of the earth."

Upon the Church generally was laid this great responsibility, for all members of the Church are "kings and priests," representatives, witnesses of the King-Priest, Who reigns and pleads in the unseen. To the Church generally was this charge committed. That St. Paul would have been the first to admit; but he clearly distinguishes this general witness borne by the Church to her Head, from the special ministry entrusted to himself and his brother apostles. "To us is committed the word of reconciliation." We are in a special sense the witnesses of our Master. We are His official representatives—chosen by Him, authorized, accredited, charged with all those means of grace which He has provided in His Church, stewards of the mysteries of God. We—and he would hardly have applied this term to private members of the Church—we are ambassadors for

Christ, official representatives of the unseen Lord; we are the organs through which He works, the mouthpieces through which He speaks, the channels through which His influence will be exerted. We are in the world in the place of Christ.

None, I suppose, would deny this—that the apostles and prophets of the first age were the authorized representatives of Christ for carrying on His work of reconciliation, that they were in a special sense His accredited ambassadors; but can we possibly limit this ministry of reconciliation to the apostolic age? Was it afterwards to be left to shift for itself? Were succeeding generations to be left to the ministry of any who might think themselves moved to undertake it? I need not stop, I think, to argue this point. Whatever views may be held on the question of the ministry, this at least would be admitted by the vast majority of Christian people, that some members of the Church were from the first set apart and consecrated for that special work of reconciliation which was first committed to the apostles. Holy Scripture itself, history, common sense, are all at one on this point. But, if so, we cannot escape the inference. The language of St. Paul may and must be applied to all properly commissioned ministers. If to us is committed in any sense a ministry of reconciliation, we cannot shrink from the title which St. Paul claims. We, too, must be ambassadors for Christ, accredited representatives, with special power to act in His behalf.

But this is just what so many people do shrink

from, do stumble at; this is just that theory of the ministry which is to many so unacceptable, so often stigmatized as sacerdotalism; and yet it seems to be forced upon us by the necessities of the case. If we can adopt St. Paul's language in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, as our Church does adopt it, when she prays for the clergy as ministers and stewards of the mysteries of Christ, we cannot consistently refuse to adopt it when he is regarding his ministry in another aspect. If, following St. Paul's example, we can rightly claim to be stewards of the mysteries of God, then we must be also ambassadors of Christ.

Now I think that we shall find that the dislike of that view of the ministry involved in the word "ambassador" has really arisen from a misunderstanding on the part both of clergy and people of its meaning and of what it implies.

For it appears to me to cover both these theories of the ministry which have always been so sharply divided and so impossible to reconcile. I mean the theory which regards the clergy as the divinely commissioned representatives of Christ, as well as that which repudiates any Divine authority altogether, and looks upon them merely as delegates and officers of the congregation, to be appointed and deposed by them.

Let us look at the word a little more closely. We are ambassadors for Christ, representatives of Christ. Yes, but Jesus Christ is Son of Man as well as Son of God, and we are ambassadors of the Son of Man as well as of the Son of God.

And as Son of Man He is one with humanity. He has placed Himself on man's level ; He has stood in man's place ; He is the representative Man. As Son of Man He is meek and lowly in heart. As Son of Man He washes His own disciples' feet. As Son of Man He submits to insult and indignity, to rejection and desertion ; He is obedient unto death. As Son of Man He shares in all respects in the lot of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. He is one of them.

But as Son of God He speaks as never man spake. He proclaims the new law with more than human authority. He claims equality with the Father. He is the Dispenser of Divine gifts. He bestows the Holy Ghost. He communicates to His apostles that power which is inherent in Himself, the power of forgiving sins. He accepts the homage and worship of His disciples.

The ideal minister of Christ must be a witness and a representative of his Master under both aspects. He must represent Him as Son of Man and as Son of God. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." You remember how St. Paul keeps the two sides of the ministry in their proper proportion ; "I magnify my office ; I am the ambassador of Christ." Yes, but "I am also less than the least of all saints." "I am the chief of sinners." "I count not myself to have apprehended ; I am all things to all men."

We feel, as we follow St. Paul, that he is a true minister of Jesus Christ, a real representative of the Son of Man as well as an ambassador of the Son of

God ; he is man as well as priest. We feel that in him the human and the official meet—find their true union.

Pass from the New Testament to the history of the Church. Almost the first voice that we hear out of the darkness and obscurity of the earliest period speaks to us in tones strangely like those of the great apostle of the Gentiles—the voice of Ignatius of Antioch. He, too, magnifies his office ; he, too, claims to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ. “Every one,” he says—and again and again through his letters the same note rings out—“every one whom the Master of the household sendeth to be steward over His own house, we ought to receive as Him that sent him.” “Plainly, therefore, we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.” Again and again does he urge this with the earnestness of a most intense conviction. But he, too, like his great predecessor, is a true son of man. Bishop though he is, claiming as he does to stand in the place of Christ, to be received and respected as the ambassador of Christ, he is yet the humblest of men. “I am,” he says, “I am a condemned man.” “I am a convict.” “I am a slave.” “I am only just beginning to be a disciple.” He, too, is intensely human. He, too, is man as well as priest.

Had they always been thus kept in balance, these two sides of the Christian ministry, no voice, we may be sure, would ever have been raised to impugn its authority, or deny and reject its Divine commission ; but as soon as the Divine side, the official side, is

exaggerated at the expense of the human, as soon as the Christian priesthood shows signs of becoming stereotyped, formal, official, and official only ; directly it begins to assert its claim to be the organ through which the Head of the Church works, without representing the humility, the meekness, the gentleness, the self-effacement of the Son of Man, the puritan spirit is roused, the anti-sacerdotal protest is raised. What are Montanism, Novatianism, Donatism, and the many movements of a similar kind which meet us as we study the history of the Church? What are they when we come to the root of the matter, but protests, exaggerated, unbalanced, if you like, but not altogether unreasonable, against the onesided and inadequate representation of Jesus Christ by the official ministry of His Church? If only men had been able to keep a firm hold on this double aspect of the ministry, if only they had kept the two sides in proper proportion, that fatal mistake would never have been made—the mistake which has alienated, which is now alienating, so many true Christian spirits from the Catholic Church of Christ—the mistake of regarding the ministry as a separate caste, isolated from the laity, standing as mediators between them and God.

How can they be, if the Church is the Body of Christ, if the Church is Christ? Nay, rather in so far as the Church is the body of Christ, we its ministers are representatives of the Church ; we are the organs through which the Church acts. In one sense, the Christian priest is certainly the parson. In his small

sphere, as a writer¹ of our own time has reminded us, "he bears the person of the Church," he is the representative person in his own parish, and as the parson of his parish, as representing the members of the Church, he must be in touch with them, he must be in sympathy with them, he must share in their lot, their troubles, their sorrows, their joys, their interests; he must not be isolated from them; he must be one with them.

We must be to our people what Christ was to the race as the Son of Man; we must be men; we must be manly in the truest and best sense of the word. The people of England of our day must come to believe in our manhood before they will believe in our priesthood. Let us keep this aspect of the ministry steadily before us—it is one great half of the truth which must never be lost sight of—but do not let us stop there, do not let us be content with half a truth, however important that half may be. We are parsons; yes, but we are more than parsons. Yet how many of the English clergy have been content to stop here—to be parsons only, to lead the average respectable life, to be distinguished in nothing from the people whom they represent, to share in their occupations, their pursuits, their amusements, to be popular in society, to be no better, if no worse than those around them, but to be in no sort patterns and examples of the flock, to show no signs of a supernatural life.

But this is what the man, who is only the parson,

¹ Bishop Moberly's "Bampton Lectures," p. 8.

who has no higher ideal of the Christian ministry subsides into. It is this type of a clergyman which that great missionary, Bishop Steere,¹ had in his mind when he writes, "I feel that there must have been a radical defect in the training which has given us the most honest and manly clergy in Christendom, but nothing more." My brethren, we do want this, we *do* want this honest and manly clergy; but we want more—we want personal holiness and an unworldly spirit. Bishop Steere goes on to say, "It is not the popular clergy who are the strength of the Church; its real defenders are those who compel respect by their lives, who are manifestly actuated by a higher spirit than the mass of the community. We all want raising, and we must all strive and pray that our successors may be better than ourselves."

We must be *parsons*, in the true and best sense of the term; but we must be priests as well, if we are to be really ambassadors of Christ.

It is the combination of the two characters that we have to aim at, for each is the safeguard of the other. Exaggerate the priestly side, as has been done in the sister Church of Rome; isolate candidates for the ministry from the world, cut them off from all contact with their fellows, from all knowledge of men, from all share in the occupations and interests of those to whom they are to minister; train them as priests alone, and what is the result? In individual cases you may get men of rare saintliness of life, of complete unworldliness, sometimes of most Christlike

¹ "Memoir of Bishop Steere," p. 93.

self-renunciation, heroes of faith like Father Damien ; but as a body they are—they must be from the nature of the case—out of touch with the laity ; they cannot be true sons of men ; they cannot be really manly ; they cannot take the lead as the clergy must do in social questions ; they cannot really leaven society ; they must be, more or less, a separate caste.

On the other hand, ignore the priestly side and leave only the parson, and the result is, generally speaking, a very respectable, honest man of the world and little more.

Look again at this word “ambassador.” I think if we study it carefully it will lead us to the true conception of the Christian priest. *πρεσβεύομεν ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ* might not unfairly be translated “we are priests on behalf of Christ” ; at least the identity of root in the two words priest and ambassador, is most suggestive. “We are priests on behalf of Christ” ! But how it transfigures the whole idea of priest when we regard it in the light of this word ambassador ! An ambassador, what is he ? The representative of his sovereign at a foreign court, invested with full powers to act in his sovereign’s name. His word is the word of his master—his action is the action of his master. To him in his official capacity is paid the same respect as would be paid to the sovereign in person. Does not this help us to the true idea of the Christian priesthood ? As the earthly ambassador acts for and represents his earthly sovereign, so does the Christian priest act for and represent his Heavenly Master.

But there is one essential difference between the two. The ambassador at the foreign court is the representative of an absent sovereign ; he is so far an independent agent that he is in no living connection with his master ; but the Christian priest is the ambassador not of an absent but of a present Christ. He is the representative of a King Who though invisible is really present. Here is the difference—but it is a vital one—between the ambassador of this world and the minister of Christ. Here is the distinction, but it is essential—between the false sacerdotalism and the true priesthood.

Looking at it in this light we see that there can be no independent priesthood standing between man and his Maker. There is but one Priest, Jesus Christ. Just as in Israel of old every priest was in theory a representative of the High Priest, so in the new Israel, in the Church of God, every Christian priest is just the visible representative, the organ, the instrument of the One Priest, ever present in His Church, hidden only by the veil of sense. All that the Christian minister does in his priestly character, he does simply as the human instrument through which the Great Head of the Church is pleased to work.

See how clear and strong is the sense of this union between Christ and His human servants in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Peter heals the cripple at the gate of the Temple, but it is in the Name of Jesus Christ, in union with Jesus Christ, and any independent power is indignantly repudiated by the Apostles. He raises the paralyzed Æneas, but again

it is the Christ Who is working through His minister. "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." But I need not multiply illustrations—St. Paul's Epistles are saturated with this truth of the living union between Christ and His servants. And, my brethren, it is this living union between Christ and His ambassadors that makes a Christian priesthood possible ; not in our own name do we preach, but in the Name of, that is in union with, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Not as independent priests do we pronounce the absolution, we are but the mouthpiece through which the Great Absolver pronounces the forgiveness of the penitent. It is not we that distribute to His people His Body and Blood ; it is He Who uses our hands and our feet. Not we who bless, but He Who employs our voice as the organ through which He promises the peace which passeth all understanding. Yes, truly, for "Apart from Me ye can do nothing." It is this which constitutes the vital distinction between the true and the false priesthood. But this distinction is not yet generally understood by Christians ; it cannot be understood till the belief in the living Christ becomes a real conviction in the Church : it cannot be understood till the faith of Christians is led on from the Gospel of the Cross with its blessed assurance of personal forgiveness and personal redemption to the Gospel of the Resurrection and the Ascension—to the Gospel of the Christ to Whom all power is given in Heaven and earth, Who is pleading as the Great High Priest, Who is reigning as the King, Who is present in His Church, Who is work-

ing through His ministers, Who asks only for surrendered hearts and wills, to make His presence known and His power felt, to draw all men unto Him.

It is through the Church that the Incarnation is to be extended. It is the Church that is to be the witness of the living Christ. The Church generally, the ministry specially.

It is in our consecrated lives that He will live again upon earth—through them He will work, through them He will exert His Divine attraction. Apart from Him we are nothing—we have nothing—we can do nothing.

This is the inspiration of the ministerial life, this living union with Christ. This is the source of confidence and hope. This it is which will lift our lives above the average. This it is which will make our ministration more powerful, more solemn, more reverent. This, and this alone, will keep us from formalism and unreality. Yes, and this, and nothing but this, will really reconcile the people to our priesthood.

Let us go forth, then, in the power of this belief, in the strength of this union, to bear a twofold testimony—to be at once witnesses of Jesus and ambassadors of Christ. Witnesses of Jesus, the meek, the lowly, the Son of Man, overcoming opposition, dispelling prejudice, winning those who shrink from us as priests by our true manliness, our humility, our freedom from arrogance and self-assertion.

Ambassadors of Christ, the Son of God, witnessing

by our faithful stewardship of His means of grace, by the spirituality of our lives, by the confidence of our faith, by the solemnity and reverence of our ministrations, witnessing to the presence in the world of a power which is not of the world—the power of Him Who through His Church and His ministry will at last draw all men unto Him.

PAPERS.

XIII.

THE NEW THEOLOGY.

I DID not invent this subject, and I am not responsible for it. It was in the list of suggested subjects, and I put my name down for it without thinking much at the time about its treatment, and when I came to close quarters with it I found how difficult it was, and how impossible to deal with in a paper of half an hour. I do not, therefore, profess to do more than offer a few rather disjointed thoughts upon the question which, I confess, is to me one of deep interest, in the hope at least of stimulating discussion, perhaps of helping to remove difficulties and promoting mutual understanding.

I. And first with regard to the term "New Theology," it is somewhat misleading and vague, it is calculated to provoke suspicion and alarm in conservative minds.

I should myself prefer to call it, with a writer in an American Review, some few years back, "the Theological Renaissance of the nineteenth century." But even this, of course, is indefinite and liable to be misunderstood, although it does not sound so revolutionary as "new theology."

2. Well, then, to clear the ground a little, I suppose that most sensible persons would be prepared at least to go as far as this, in the direction of "new theology," they would be willing to admit that the form in which theological truth is expressed must necessarily vary in different ages, the religious phraseology, the method of handling doctrines which commended itself to the eighteenth century may be utterly unintelligible to the nineteenth. Take a sermon of one of the great masters of the eighteenth or seventeenth centuries, of South, or Barrow, or Andrewes, how utterly flat, how entirely unmeaning it would be to a mixed congregation of to-day.

And why is this? Not only because of their long windedness, and of their old-fashioned language, but because the very statement and setting of the doctrines which they preach is out of touch with the spirit of the age in which we live. Theological truths to be accepted by the people must be re-stated, reset in a form which is in harmony with the thought of the time, with the *Zeitgeist*. In this sense at least in every age there is need of a "new theology." Some of you no doubt remember how powerfully this is urged in the Memoir of Henri Perreyve by Père Gratry. May I quote a passage or two bearing on this point? "St. Paul bids those whose office it is to teach, not to speak to men in an unknown tongue, 'not unto men but unto God;' he edifieth himself, but not the Church; he speaks, but no man hears. *Nemo enim audit.*" What does this mean? what is this unknown tongue which is nevertheless a gift of God, which

speaks to God, which edifies him who speaks but yet which no man understandeth ; what language is this ? The answer is plain. It is the sacred word itself which does indeed set forth the doctrine and the mysteries of the spirit and is understood of God, but which men neither understand nor listen to. "I have set forth the truth," says a preacher, who has spoken this unknown tongue, "men have not listened ; it is their own fault ;" but, listen, "Let him that speaketh pray that he may interpret, *oret ut interpretetur*." Of a truth it is not enough, to preach the mysteries of Christianity through mere formulæ, which, albeit true before God, are not readily understood. What St. Paul calls "interpreting the unknown tongue," is to frame the living word anew with every age, suiting it to the needs of that age without departing from the venerable antiquity of truth. But the very first condition of knowing how to do this is a knowledge of the times in which we are living, *Hoc autem tempus quare non probatis ?*

Yes, indeed this is what we have to do or we must plainly give up all hope of winning our age or that which is to come.

Again, it is of no avail to go on for generation after generation repeating eternal truths in an unknown tongue. *Nemo enim audit*. Surely those men who refuse to translate these everlasting formulæ into modern language, who will not preach the unknown God who is now ignorantly served by our people, who cannot speak that people's language, surely they prove this very fact, they say that

all is lost ; that the ages as they flow on must fall deeper and deeper into the gulf, that none can draw them out. "The world is fast nearing its close," they say ; "let us save our own souls, let us raise our standard and die : let us fall beneath the shadow of our eternal credo ;" "Let us also go that we may die with Him." Compare with this, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, let us go and wake him out of sleep."

This note, so clearly struck by a priest of the Church of Rome, finds an echo, I am sure, in the heart of many a priest of the Church of England to-day. A cardinal element then, a first principle of the new theology is the restatement of the vital truths of Christianity in a "tongue understood by the people." Surely, if this is true generally, *à fortiori* must it be necessary in an age which has witnessed greater revolutions in every department of thought than any previous century in the history of the world. [Evolution in geology, biology, sociology.]

3. I said I thought all sensible persons would probably admit the need of *some* modification of theological statement and expression in order to bring the doctrines of Christianity into touch with the spirit of the age, but then comes the vital question, How much modification, how far does this new theology want to go? At least we cannot be blind to the fact that there is a growing desire outside as well as in our own Church for a *deeper and more living* theology, than is supplied by popular Protestantism, and a growing anticipation that some change is impending in the near future. May I quote

Dr. Milligan, certainly one of the most devout and Catholic minded orthodox persons of the present day ? "Almost all the branches of the Reformed Church are now anxiously longing for a deeper and more living theology than was left them by the Reformation." And he goes on to say, "It is from the thoughts of St. John, and from the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ, the sum and substance of Christianity, is presented by him, that that theology will spring."

We may, in answer to the question, how far does it want to go? first, draw the line clearly and distinctly between the new theology which aims at eliminating the supernatural from Christianity altogether, but would retain the ideas while it discards the facts, and the new theology which only seeks for some readjustment of the relations between the visible and the invisible. Between these two, as far as we can see at present, there is a great gulf fixed, which cannot be bridged over. A champion of the former, quoted by Delitzsch, confesses, "As soon as I can convince myself of the Resurrection of Christ, this absolute miracle, as St. Paul seems to declare it, I shatter the modern conception of the world. This breach in the order of nature, which I regard as inviolable, would be an irreparable breach in my system, and in my whole world of thought."

The latter is not out of sympathy with the modern spirit. It accepts thankfully many of the results of what is called rationalistic criticism, and, while holding fast to the great facts of revelation, aims at reconciling them with the modern view of the world, endeavours

so to state them that they may be reconciled, and believes that the old faith can live with the new. Is not the possibility of such a reconciliation virtually conceded by the last sentence in Mr. Wallace's book on Darwinism? "We find that the Darwinian theory, even when carried out to its extreme logical conclusion, not only does not oppose but lends a decided support to a belief in the spiritual nature of man. It shows us how man's body may have been developed from that of a lower animal form under the laws of natural selection, but it also teaches us that we possess intellectual and moral faculties which could not have been so developed, but must have had another origin; and for this origin we can only find an adequate cause in the unseen universe of spirit."

4. Well, if it is not agnostic or naturalistic, some one will perhaps say, "This new theology is much the same as Broad churchism, which whittles down the supernatural as much as it can and dislikes any definite doctrine at all." But I do not think it can be identified with the view of any party in the Church. It is true that one of its characteristics is breadth. You may remember the story of Michael Angelo going into Raphael's studio when Raphael was first beginning to paint, and, finding there a sketch on his easel, Michael Angelo drew wider lines round the figures, etc., and wrote across the sketch the word "*amplius*." So the watchword of the new theology is *amplius*—wider views, wider sympathies, wider hopes, than we find in the old theology. At least I am sure of this, that many

so-called High churchmen are quite as much in sympathy with it as any are ; but if it be traced to the teaching of only one man, that man would be F. D. Maurice, and I do not think that Mr. Maurice could fairly be classed as either Broad, or Low, or High, but was rather a combination of all three—not depreciating the work of the Tractarians in reviving the Catholic faith and Catholic teaching ; but the best representative of that tone and temper of mind, that way of looking at things, which characterizes the new theology.

Now, in reading Maurice's life, or studying his works, you find two chief characteristics—breadth and depth. (*a*) In contradistinction to the popular theology of the day, which was narrow, limited, and exclusive, Maurice taught a larger, grander idea of the Kingdom of God, he struggled to restore the belief in the real Fatherhood of God—in the Incarnation as bringing the whole world into new relations—in the world, therefore, as God's world, not lying under a curse, but in process of redemption from the power of sin and Satan. He strove, and not in vain, to rescue revelation from that degraded conception of it, which regarded it merely as a body of doctrines received on adequate testimony as supplying rules for conduct and religious formulæ for belief ; he strove to restore it to its true meaning as the gradual unveiling of Himself by God to man as man is able to bear it ; and, lastly, he laboured to raise men's minds above systems of theology and schemes of salvation to a living faith in the risen and reigning Christ.

(b) But if the teaching of Maurice was stamped by breadth, it bore no less plainly upon it the mark of depth. No one who knows anything of his life or writings can fail to have been impressed by his deep spirituality, his intense reality, his deep sense of sin, and at the same time his belief that man was capable of knowing more and more of God. His thirst after such knowledge—it was this which impelled him to get behind the forms and the formulæ in which living truths are sometimes stereotyped and their meaning perverted and obscured, and to restate and present these truths in a newer and perhaps a truer light.

In doing all this, Maurice had to encounter the most bitter opposition and persecution from the religious world and the religious press, which, mistaking, as it so often does, its own narrow and inadequate interpretation of doctrines or truths for the truths themselves, attacked and vilified Maurice as if he were the blackest of heretics. What the dominant religious party of that day wanted was to tie the clergy down within the narrow limits of its own orthodoxy, to force them to preach and teach only those particular formulæ, only those particular shibboleths which then passed current for the Catholic faith. It was against limitations like this that Maurice contended, it was for a freer, fuller, more Catholic gospel that he suffered persecution. It was for that very right of restating truth in a tongue understood by the soul of man, and appealing to the conscience and reason of man, that he fought.

Again, let me say that I do not want to underrate

the part played by other great and good men in restoring a larger, a more Catholic, a more primitive faith to the Church of England. But my own impression is that to the influence of Maurice especially is due that temper, spirit, and tone of mind which is peculiar to the new theology.

If I may so say, without offence or being misunderstood, the service which Maurice and the men of his type rendered to the Church was a twofold one ; first, by correcting and supplying the deficiencies in, and putting life into, the evangelical theology, which was, generally speaking, hard and artificial, and which had a tendency to substitute formulæ for faith in a living Father and a living Christ. And, secondly, in supplying what was wanting in the High church or Tractarian school, which, though it had done splendid work by reviving long forgotten doctrines and bringing back its Catholicity to the Church of England, was certainly inclined to oppose the spirit of the age by the spirit of a former age, to set the spirit of absolute submission to Church authority against the spirit of voluntary association, and to leave the world continuing in childhood instead of advancing through boyhood to manhood.

5. Let us now just glance at some of the ways in which this spirit of the New Theology is influencing, and will probably influence much more, the thought of Christendom, or at least of the Anglican communion.

And (a) first in the direction of unity. We may not see *much* evidence of it yet—and the notes of

discord are still very frequent, very loud—but this larger and more liberal spirit is making way. It aims at fusing and combining and unifying the distinctive characteristics of High and Broad and Low, which the old theology used to think mutually exclusive. It emphasizes the points of contact rather than the points of difference. It looks back upon the past and sees how, first of all, Church authority was overstrained, gave way, and broke down, as the only basis on which revelation was to rest ; how the Bible was then made supreme—the Bible as its own interpreter—how this led, and led naturally, to incessant and interminable controversy as to its real meaning. We see how men took refuge from this turmoil of opposing opinion, first in an inner light which would guide them infallibly to the knowledge of God and duty, and then at last, in the supremacy of reason, which, usurping the place of the Bible and the Church, really substituted for revelation the religion of common sense. We know what the consequences were—the loss of reverence and awe, of enthusiasm and spirituality, of beauty, of self-sacrifice, of nearly everything that makes religion attractive. Methodism and Evangelicalism rescued it from this depressing rule of reason and common sense ; but, by a natural reaction, fell into the other extreme, and made its appeal only to the feelings and emotions, only to half the man ; and, further, made its appeal to man as an individual only, and not to man as a social being, as a member of a body, as a member of the Church.

The new theology seeks to profit by the teaching of God in history. It aims at combining all in due and proper proportion. It wants to combine the authority of the Church with loving faith and evangelical piety; the reverence for the Bible as the source of those living truths which supply the motive power of life, with the reverence for reason which is a divine gift, and, as Butler reminds us, the only faculty we have by which to judge of revelation itself.

This is a point on which one is tempted to enlarge, and which of course suggests the question, "What is the proper proportion in which they should be combined?" But this would be difficult to answer, and would take a paper to itself. I therefore pass on to the next point which seems to arise out of the preceding.

(*b*) The spirit of toleration, or rather of tolerance—and here again the new theology is in marked contrast with the old—which could never endure that any opinions which differed from its own, any doxy which differed from "my doxy, which, of course, is orthodoxy," should be allowed to exist without attack and persecution. I think we want to get a clearer idea of what tolerance is. With many persons it is identical with lack of earnestness, of any strong conviction; with them tolerance means the indifference which "smiles benignly on all the creeds and heresies and opinions—God bless you, every one"—because it has no real creed or opinion or even a genuine, hearty heresy of its own.

But the new theology has discovered that real tolerance is compatible with the very deepest and strongest convictions. And you can prove that we Christians have full tolerance for Buddhists and Mahommedans, who are as far from us as the poles ; we have less for the Quaker and Congregationalist ; least of all for the man of our own Church, but of another "school of thought" from ours. What does this imply ? When the difference is greatest we are most sure of our ground, and so can afford to be tolerant ; when the difference is least we have most misgivings, and then tolerance is weak. I am sure it is an axiom that the deeper the roots of our faith go, the more charitable and tender we are, or rather, we can be, with those who differ with us.

The new theology differs widely from the old—and here I go back some way—in holding tolerance as a divine thing, whereas the Church through so many ages believed that intolerance of what it thought error was a sacred duty. It has come to see that opinion cannot and must not be forced ; that until you can persuade men by reason that yours is the better way, it is really better that they should remain as they are. Or, as has been formulated, tolerance "is the willing consent that other men should hold and express opinions with which we disagree until they are convinced by reason that those opinions are untrue."

As a necessary corollary, from this springs another principle of the new theology—that it is always better to aim at the establishment of positive truth

rather than the destruction of negative error. It believes that, as a general rule, it is a more Christian policy, a more divine policy, to assert plainly and clearly what we believe to be true, without condemning or denouncing what we believe to be false, having learnt by experience that error is always, or almost always, fostered by opposition, and believing that this method has the highest sanction in the apostolic rule, "Overcome evil with good."

Again, the new theology differs from the old in its larger foothold in human nature. As one of its supporters has said, "It is the characteristic fault of the old theology that it touches human nature as a sphere touches a plane, at one point only, as in the doctrine of Divine sovereignty; the whole being of God resting on man in that one truth. The new theology would present, rather, as plane resting on plane, the whole of God in contact with the whole of man." Is there not some truth in this? Was not, for instance, the theology of the Schoolmen, and afterwards that of Calvin, wrought out with great exactitude of thought in a series of logical propositions into a most harmonious and self-consistent whole, but not resting fairly and squarely on human life, not finding any quick and ready response from the complex nature of man, was it not accepted rather as something to be believed on adequate testimony, but often coming into direct collision not only with reason, but also with conscience? Is not this, perhaps, the reason why so many of the poets, the dramatists, the novelists, the students of human nature have stood

outside theology and felt no sympathy with it, because they saw that it, or so much of it, was out of touch with that nature?

“The new spirit aims at broadening the domain of theology till it embraces the breadth of human nature and the knowledge of the world.” It is supposed to be averse to what is called definite teaching. This is so far true that, to use a phrase of F. W. Robertson’s, it would prefer to teach suggestively rather than dogmatically, to present Christian doctrines in such a way as to show that they correspond to the needs, and satisfy the aspirations of human nature. I think it would try to teach man to believe in the perfection of Christ’s human nature antecedently to the belief in His Divine nature, after the example of “Ecce Homo!” I am speaking, of course, of thoughtful persons, not of children.

I think that in this connection I may say that the new theology has a great dislike to form schemes of salvation, to the attempt to present the whole of God’s truth in a well-rounded, logical, consistent system. This has always been a great temptation to theologians, but it acknowledges that it cannot as yet, perhaps never will, be able to, reconcile the different aspects of truth, and it prefers to follow the example of the New Testament and hold them in balance, not exaggerating one at the expense of another.

6. Let me now very briefly touch upon the attitude and relation of the new theology to (*a*) science, (*b*) the Bible, (*c*) the Church, (*d*) eschatology.

“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”

(a) Its principles permit us to look fearlessly upon the progress of science, nay, to look upon it with sympathy and admiration, regarding science as the search after God in the natural world, as theology is in the spiritual world. They have no right to intrude upon or collide with one another.

It does not, on that account, submissively accept all the results of scientific inquiry as gospel, it sees that there may be, must be, stages in the gradual progress of science when it may seem to be in opposition to revelation; but it lays it down as a first principle that there can be no lasting antagonism between the two. It does not throw in its lot blindly with the doctrine of evolution, though it gratefully acknowledges that the evolution theory has helped rather than hindered the cause of Christianity by enlarging and ennobling our view of the relation of God to the universe. "In questions physical and metaphysical it has no concern, and utters no voice; with the achievements of science it never competes, nor can it be contradicted by them, it encourages its researches, ennobles its aspirations, crowns and completes its discoveries; into the dead body of physical truth, it puts the living soul of faith in the Divine author."

It deprecates strongly all panic and all opposition on the part of theologians towards science, and it does so because one of its cardinal principles is that revelation is concerned only with the ethical and spiritual. It has nothing to do with geology or biology, with the age of the world or the origin of

species, or with anything in fact which man can discover by his own ability, industry, and perseverance; revelation addresses itself, the new theology thinks, to man as a moral and spiritual being alone.

(*b*) Resting on this principle, it approaches the study of the Bible, with regard to which perhaps there is the greatest divergence between the old theology and the new. The latter, while it holds profoundly its belief in inspiration, has modified very considerably that cast-iron theory of it, which was almost universal fifty years ago, which believed that every word was inspired, every sentence upon every subject was of equal value, so that doctrines could find support from texts taken at random from any part of the Old or the New Testament without any regard to the context, a theory formed from an *à priori* view of what it ought to be, rather than from a study of the facts of the Bible, the consequence of which was that the facts of the Bible had to be squared with the theory, with the disastrous results of bringing Christianity and the Church into violent collision with reason and science.

The Church has been gradually feeling the influence of the new theology, it has almost universally adopted the principle of a progressive revelation which is the real key of the position, a gradual progress from the less to the more perfect in moral and spiritual knowledge, and it will stand upon an immovable rock when it moves on to the position which the new theology has taken up; that the Divine illumination of the faculties of man, which we call inspiration, does not extend to those subjects which can be

discovered by human ability and research, but is confined to moral and spiritual knowledge alone.

"The message of the Bible is a message from God's heart to our eyes. It cannot be proved by reason, nor can it be disproved; it appeals not to sight but to faith, and belongs to the realm of spirit and not to that of sense. Science may have much to alter in our notions of its earthly embodiment, but its essential contents it cannot touch; that is not theory but reality, it is not philosophy but life, not flesh but spirit. It is the living, breathing, feeling love of God become articulate, it needs no evidence of sense; in the immutable instincts of the human heart it has its attestation, it rests on a basis no sane criticism can undermine, nor solid science shake. Happy the man whose faith has found this fixed foundation."

(c) Resting on this principle, too, the new theology faces without fear the burning question of to-day—the critical reconstruction of the Old Testament, and especially of the Pentateuch.

On the one hand, it does not throw up the sponge, and accept without question the dogmas of German critics. On the other hand, it does not shut its eyes to facts; it does not do violence to its reason; it does not deliberately turn its face to the past, and its back to the future; it is willing to admit certain of what may be called the demonstrated results of criticism (I have no time to say what they are). It will not fall back upon that desperate position of conservative theologians and say that if certain books are not by the

authors to whom tradition has assigned them, therefore they are barefaced forgeries. It has a *tertium quid*, a third position on which it can rest. Granting this, it says, "This is a question which must be decided by experts, by trained critics, whether the balance of probability is in favour of the earlier or later date of a book of the Old Testament." What we want to be clear about is this, that the question of authorship (though of course an important one) is not a question of first-rate importance ; that the value of a book to the individual soul does not depend upon whether it was written at the time, or by the person tradition has assigned it to (though this is doubtless a highly interesting question), for tradition may have been and often has been, mistaken ; but it does depend upon the spiritual and moral lessons that the book teaches, upon its revelation of the character and will of God, its correspondence to the spiritual and moral needs of human nature, and the message to our own souls.

Our attitude to criticism, like our attitude to evolution, should be this—we should accept what seem the proved results ; or, at any rate, a working hypothesis : "How does this affect my belief as a Christian, supposing it is in substance true ?" The Bible being its own witness, date and authorship are of secondary importance compared with the witness it bears to its own spiritual teaching and its own Divine inspiration.

(*d*) Next to the Bible there is perhaps the greatest difference between the new theology and the old on the subject of eschatology, of probation, judgment,

future punishment, and eternal life. And here, I think, the new theology may fairly be called a renaissance, for it is, generally speaking, only going behind the Augustinian theology, which for centuries has dominated western Christendom, and reviving the belief and the teaching of the earlier and especially, but not exclusively, that of the Alexandrian school; not exclusively, for no one taught the wider hope more clearly and boldly than Gregory of Nazianzen, and apparently without any censure from the Church of his day.

Dr. Plumptre, in his "Spirits in Prison," has shown clearly how the thought of Latin Christianity was moulded by the influence of Augustine, and how the terrible consequences of his stern doctrine were mitigated in the Roman Church by admitting a purgatorial fire for those who are not among the very bad. Popular Protestantism, influenced by the still harder spirit of Calvin, does not even concede this element of mitigation, and by the complete ignoring of the intermediate state, and the teaching of the absolute and hopeless corruption of human nature, shuts the door of hope completely against the vast majority of the human race. The reaction against this appalling state of things was inevitable, and yet those who led the van were abused and persecuted as if they were the enemies of God. If they attempted to restate their belief in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, and to restore the older interpretation to words like eternal life, hell fire, salvation, etc., they were taunted with a total denial of retribution.

Happily that is now past. The spirit of the new theology is gradually penetrating the Church, and obliging men to restate these doctrines. The Revised Version compels it, the thought of the age demands it—not in the direction of making light of sin, God forbid, not even in the direction of denying the possibility of endless punishment, but at least in the direction of getting rid of the hard literalism which has caused the symbolic language of the New Testament to be taken *au pied de la lettre*—at least in the direction of teaching that the punishment is not arbitrary, but conditioned by, and flowing naturally out of, the sin ; in teaching that the wrath of God is directed against sin, while He loves and would save the sinner ; that fire and pain are connected with life, and coldness and insensibility with death ; that although it may be true that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, the Church exists on the other side of the veil as well as on this. We do not believe in *extra ecclesiam nulla gratia*. Much depends on what we mean by *salus*, and that there is an intermediate state in which some kind of moral progress is going on, is certainly hinted at in such a parable as that of Dives and Lazarus. I am not here going beyond what you will find in so orthodox a paper as the *Expositor*, of July, 1888, which shows strongly the influence of the new theology.

In conclusion, I would only say that I cannot see that much of the new theology, as I understand it, is incompatible with the Catholic faith, or with an intelligent and reverent interpretation of the Bible.

XIV.

OLD TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES.¹

“What is true, is safe.”—MOTTO OF COURTENAY’S.

1. IMPORTANCE *of subject*. These *difficulties*: (1) which the Secularist lecturer finds his most useful weapon, and which the Free-thinker is never tired of making a subject of the coarsest ridicule; (2) which more than anything else cause the thoughtful working-man to lose his hold on Christianity. As soon as he begins to think for himself, he is met by these difficulties. He has no one to explain them—scepticism, then rejection of the Bible. (Views which occasion the difficulties. N.B. That many of us have long repudiated them.)

2. *Why are we so shy of meeting these difficulties and answering them?*

Because two types of mind—

(a) The Conservative. Clinging to old beliefs. Disliking new ideas. Content to go on, either ignoring the difficulties, or explaining them in a way which shocks reason and common sense.

(b) The Liberal. Progressive; naturally sceptical;

¹ Printed, in part, from rough notes only.

open to new light ; imbued with the spirit of the age, which accepts nothing on authority, but only on its own merits.

The first type dwells contentedly on what is intelligible, helpful, edifying, and overlooks what is not.

The second type naturally fastens on the difficulties, and till they are explained satisfactorily, refuses to go any further ; or often, too hasty, too impatient, throws over the old beliefs at the first attack. Motto for such minds, "Prove all things, but hold fast that which is good."

The former, good, devout, earnest, religious, yet opposes all new views—*e.g.* Galileo. Defends old positions by questionable methods, until at last obliged to relinquish them. Disastrous to the cause of religion.

Christ recognizes this spirit : "No man who has drunk old wine."

Agassiz' saying, "Every new scientific truth passes through three stages in its reception. First, people say it is false ; then, that it is contrary to religion ; lastly, that everybody knew it before." How often has that process been gone through in case of criticism and the Bible ! It has been very hurtful to the cause of religion. Truth the first thing. The clergy are bound to tell their people what they believe to be the truth—bring difficulties into light.

Believing there is good in both types of mind, striving to hold the balance between them, let us go on to bring these difficulties into the light.

3. Three classes of difficulties :—

- (a) Scientific.
- (b) Historical.
- (c) Moral.

(a) *E.g.* account of Creation irreconcilable with geology. The Fall. Account of Flood. Serpent speaking. Balaam's ass. Many of the miracles.

(b) Discrepancies in the narrative, contradictions, mistakes ; doubtful authorship of some of the books. It is not free from errors, therefore cannot be infallible.

(c) The Divine sanction apparently given to very imperfect morality.

These are the main reasons why men do not believe the Bible.

4. *Belief.* Let us get a clear idea about this first. I find certain marvellous statements and narratives in the Old Testament, *e.g.* those I have mentioned and many others. What do I mean generally when I say, "I believe them"? Merely assent to them on authority? They are in the Bible, therefore they are literally and absolutely true? But belief of this sort does not involve the exercise of any faculty in me, mental or spiritual ; it is simply passive acquiescence.

Another man reads them ; he studies them ; he gives hard, honest, earnest thought to them ; and at last he says, "I cannot say I am perfectly convinced that they happened just as they are described, although I see that they contain valuable moral and spiritual teaching." Must such a man be called an unbeliever? Is he necessarily a worse man than

the orthodox Christian? Surely not. *Christian* faith rests in a surer foundation than this.

But then you may say, "What about the miraculous narratives of the New Testament? Does not the same reasoning apply there? *E.g.* the great crucial miracle of the Resurrection?" No. For three reasons:

(1) That the evidence for its truth is infinitely stronger than that of many of the Old Testament miracles.

(2) It is the necessary corollary of Divinity of Christ.

(3) The existence of the Christian Church without the Resurrection would be as difficult to account for as the existence of a full-grown tree without a root.

The faith of a Christian rests on—

(a) The perfect character, the sinless life of Christ—perfectly human, yet sinless. The Gospel narrative could not be invented.

(b) The effect of that life upon the apostles.

(c) The existence of the Church: no effect without a cause. This faith is not affected by any view whatever of the Old Testament. The Creeds make no reference to it at all.

5. Let me now state *the position of affairs with regard to the Old Testament.*

(a) The old view, in the words of Lord Shaftesbury: "I have heard with mine own ears a master in Israel remark, in a public assembly, that to say that the Book of Chronicles and the Gospel of St. Luke stood on the same ground of importance was to utter an untenable proposition. I say that to make such

a declaration concedes the whole question. Moreover, men contend that one part of the Bible is inspired and another not, or that there are differences in the degree of inspiration. The whole authority of the Bible is thus cut off from beginning to end. Depend upon it, my friends, there is no security whatever except in standing upon the faith of our fathers, and saying with them that the blessed old Book is God's word, written from the very first syllable down to the very last, and from the last back to the first." Honour the man, honour his reverence for the Bible; but the position a very disastrous one: every word is God's word—verbal inspiration; infallible always on every subject—all placed on the same level of value. Such a position can only be maintained by shutting your eyes to all that contradicts it; it is really an insult to reason and common sense.

(b) The modern critical spirit, whether in scholar or mechanic, examines the Old Testament with an unbiased mind, and finds that it does not agree with geology and astronomy; historical mistakes; imperfect morality. It understands that Christianity, that the Church is committed to the theory of verbal inspiration. What does it do? In the majority of cases it throws over Christianity, and falls into scepticism—and no wonder.

6. Evidently, then, the first question is to consider *what is inspiration?*

One answer to that question we have seen in the theory which supposes that all the writers of the

Bible were simply the penmen—or rather, perhaps, the pens—of the Holy Spirit; that everything they wrote on any conceivable subject is entirely free from any mixture of human error or imperfection. Now, the natural question which suggests itself is, on what does this theory rest? Let us look back.

(a) We do not find anything like it in the teaching of Christ or His apostles. They treat the Old Testament with the greatest freedom. Christ teaches men to look below the letter. He supersedes much of the old teaching, at the same time that His attitude towards it is that of reverence and love. So with His apostles and the evangelists; they quote with great freedom too, evidently thinking more of the spirit than of the letter of the passage. The only passage which touches on the question at all is 2 Tim. iii. 16—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"—where the reading is very doubtful, and where there is nothing like a definition of inspiration.

(b) Pass on to the history of the early Church. Plenty of witness is found to the inspiration of the Scriptures, but no attempt whatever is made to formulate any theory. The human element is frankly admitted alongside of the Divine. When we come to the Middle Ages, we find the Bible practically withdrawn from popular use; instead of it were substituted the doctrines of an infallible Church, the Bible regarded as a storehouse of proof-texts on which to rest the doctrines. Up to this time no idea of verbal inspiration.

(c) Then came the Reformation, followed by the revolt from the exaggerated and overstrained authority of the Church ; but still no theory of inspiration. Article 6, " Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation," etc. ; nothing more. But the rejection of the authority of the Church led, of necessity, to the substitution for it of the Bible. Men crave for absolute certainty in religion. Before the Reformation, they had found it, as they thought, in an infallible Pope or Church ; now they will have an infallible book. And so gradually grew up the belief that the Bible not only contains the word of God, but is the Word of God ; that every word of it is the Word of God, and thus absolutely free from error on every subject, *i.e.* there is no human element in it at all. Is this true ? Is this the belief of the Church, of intelligent Christians ? Now let me quote some words with regard to this theory : " The purely organic (*i.e.* mechanical) theory of inspiration rests on no Scriptural authority, and, if we except a few ambiguous metaphors, is supported by no historical testimony ; it is at variance with the whole form and fashion of the Bible, and it is destructive of all that is holiest in man and highest in religion." These are the words of one writer ; now I will give you those of another. " It will not do to say that it is not verbally inspired ; if the words are not inspired, what is ? "

This last, a champion of religion, I suppose, and the other a rationalist ? Not at all ; the first is the greatest living authority on the Bible in England, Dr. Westcott ; the last is the famous infidel lecturer,

Colonel Ingersoll, who uses this theory of verbal inspiration, to which he thinks Christianity is committed, as one of his most powerful weapons ; and if you show him, and the like of him, that the Church does not hold it, and has never really pronounced any authoritative decision on the matter, you cut the ground from under their feet.

Well, there are several other modifications of this theory of verbal inspiration, but they are all vitiated by a common fault,—they are theories of what inspiration ought to be, rather than attempts to find out what inspiration is. Any one who approaches the subject with a preconceived theory of what inspiration ought to be, is going the wrong way about it, because he is bound to try and manipulate the facts of the Bible to fit his theory. “The Bible contains the revelation of God ; it contains the Word of God : therefore it must be free from all error,—it stands to reason,” men say ; and when they find that science or history is in opposition to the theory—well, science and history are wrong, and the Bible, or rather their theory of the Bible, is right.

7. Now, *what is the true method?* Surely to study the facts of the Bible reverently yet honestly with an open mind, and if we find that any of its statements are opposed to the verified results of science, if there are historical mistakes or scientific errors, to conclude, not that the Bible is uninspired, but that it is not intended to give man a Divine revelation on matters which do not affect his moral or spiritual life. That is to say, that when the writers of the Old Testament are

dealing with these subjects, they have no knowledge above the level of the age in which they are living. The secrets of nature, the knowledge of her laws, etc., may be discovered by man's own reason and industry; and, if so, what need is there of any special revelation? why should a man be especially inspired for the purpose of finding them out? And if he had been, would he not have been unintelligible to the men of his own time? But the knowledge of spiritual things cannot be gained by a man's own unaided reason. He cannot know anything of God; he cannot know what God requires of him (or do it when he does know); he cannot grow in goodness and holiness without Divine aid, Divine inspiration. The facts of the Bible, when studied with an open mind, bear witness to a gradual revelation to men of moral and spiritual truths. When we read it and study it, we see in it how men found their way to God—found out His Will for them, how they could conform themselves to His Will. I think, then, that the facts of the Bible lead to the conclusion that inspiration extends only to moral and spiritual knowledge, only to that which makes men better and holier, more like what God intended them to be. And if I attempted to define it, I should say that inspiration is the supernatural enlightenment of that faculty in man by which he gains a deeper insight into, and a firmer grasp upon, the things of the invisible, eternal, and spiritual world; or, as a modern writer has put it, "an illumination in all that concerns religious truth." And I think, too, that the facts of the Bible,

studied without prejudice, oblige us to conclude that there are degrees of this inspiration. Certainly some writers in the Old Testament have a deeper insight into the things of God than others. Some portions of the Old Testament surely bear clearer witness to their Divine origin than others. Compare some of the Psalms or passages in the second part of Isaiah with, say, the Book of Esther, or even the Proverbs of Solomon. One can scarcely doubt that the writers of the former had more of the Divine Spirit than the last, and that their writings are of greater value to us. To say this, is not to deny that the less edifying parts of the Old Testament have not their own peculiar value and importance. Now, although this may sound to some a bold thing to say, do we not, most of us, in practice at least, act as if it were true? Why, in reading the Old Testament in church, do we miss out so much of it, pass over so many chapters, except for this very reason, that they do not make at all for the edification of the hearers? Still more is this the case in our private study of the Old Testament, which is practically confined to a comparatively small proportion of it; unless, as some do, we read it straight through religiously, and expect it to do us some good whether we understand it or not.

Let us gather up the conclusions we have arrived at.

The Old Testament, besides its wonderful moral teachings, its revelations of the character and Will of God, contains all that remains of a nation's literature history, poetry, proverbs, and legends.

In this Old Testament, too, we find the story of the Divine selection of this particular people, of its long providential training and discipline for the purpose God had in view for it, viz. to be the missionary nation, a kingdom of priests. Much of this history only instructs and edifies us when we study it as part of a great whole. When we isolate passages and look at them by themselves, out of their place in the course of the history, we find much to perplex us, much we wonder to find in a volume claiming to be the Word of God, *e.g.* parts of the story of the Judges ; but they cease to be stumbling-blocks when we take a bird's-eye view of the whole. Then they fall into their proper place, as just incidents in the training of Israel, lower stages in its education, etc.

Now, the whole of this literature is the work of men who were pre-eminently religious men—men who saw God in history everywhere, who were certainly under the influence of God's Spirit, which means that they were inspired. But there is nothing to show that this inspiration necessarily secured them from all error, or generally gave them knowledge much beyond the knowledge of their age ; *e.g.* it did not reveal to them a knowledge of science, of geography, of history : and, therefore, it is quite possible that in the early books of the Old Testament, some narratives which we have generally thought to be matter-of-fact history, may be very early traditions or even legends, which are not and were not meant to be taken as literally true ; they may be stories, parables, allegories, which the writers have made use

of to teach profound moral and spiritual truths. *E.g.* the story of the Fall. We are not bound to receive it as matter-of-fact history ; but the truths which it teaches and which most concern us are most certainly inspired by God. Why should not the Old Testament teach by story and parable as well as our Lord ? Take the story of the Prodigal Son, or the Rich Man and Lazarus, read them to a child. He will ask, "Is it quite true ?" "No," you would have to say. But these stories, into which Jesus Christ has thrown some of His most sublime and soul-stirring teaching, have been the means of converting, strengthening, and comforting millions who have never asked whether they were literally true or not. Why, then, cannot we gather doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness from the stories of the Old Testament without inquiring too closely whether they are or are not meant to be literally true in every detail ? The infancy of every nation, as of every individual, has been taught by stories, why not the infancy of Israel ? So, without pronouncing decidedly and dogmatically whether this or that narrative is matter-of-fact history or not, we may surely at least tolerate as fellow Christians those who cannot bring themselves to accept them as such. Nay, we may heartily welcome such an explanation, if it removes a stumbling-block out of the way of thoughtful, earnest men ; if it helps to smooth their path towards belief in Christ. If you say "The Bible narratives profess to be history, and history is of no value if it is not true," that is quite right as applied to writers of our

own day ; but how do we know that the men who told and wrote history three thousand years ago held the same ideas on the subject as we do ? How do we know that they did not think it quite permissible to clothe ideas and facts in the language of poetry rather than of prose, and allow their imagination to embellish their history ? As the greatest historian of Greece puts speeches into the mouths of his heroes which he thinks fitly express their ideas and opinions, so it may have been with the historians of Israel ; for one could believe that, without doubting for a moment the inspiration of the writers.

In this way I think many real difficulties in the Old Testament may be explained—such as the Fall, the Flood, Balaam's ass, etc. ; and the Old Testament made a help, instead of a hindrance, to thoughtful men who are really seekers after God.

This would be a legitimate solution of difficulties which fall under the first two heads, viz. those which are—(a) Scientific, and (b) Historical.

Now with regard to the third class, viz.—

(c) *Moral difficulties.* i. What is morality ? Difference between right and wrong.

(a) Absolute morality. Taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and gathered from the New Testament generally ; illustrated and embodied in the life of Christ, and for ever available as a standard by which the value of actions may be tested. But when that standard is not known or accepted or understood, it cannot fairly be used as a test whether actions are moral or immoral ; e.g. we should certainly

be wrong in trying the conduct and actions of Israelities during the period of the Judges by this test.

(b) Relative morality.

The standard acknowledged and accepted by the most enlightened conscience of the age or the best public opinion of the day.

ii. Before an action in any age can be called immoral, we must first determine whether the actor or actors were conscious that it was wrong.

No action can be morally wrong—or, rather, no agent can be held morally responsible for or guilty of a wrong action when his conscience does not condemn it, always supposing that he has not knowingly or wilfully tampered with his conscience.

Immorality is wrong choice by a person who knows it is wrong.

iii. The history of the Old Testament is the history of a gradual education and enlightenment of conscience and of the gradual rise of the moral standard, which means that what is not wrong or immoral in one age becomes so in the next, or later on, *e.g.* Ezekiel xviii. 2, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." In early days it was thought just for the children and all the belongings of a criminal to suffer with him. But in the age of Ezekiel this is seen to be not perfect justice. Individual responsibility, the value of the individual life, is now recognized, "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

iv. The conscience is the medium through which God makes His Will known to man. The clearness

with which that Will can be perceived and reflected depends upon the state of the medium. If it is dim and dark, only some gleams of God's truth and light can struggle through it, and be reflected by it; and the only chance (humanly speaking) of moral and spiritual progress lay in God condescending to reveal Himself to this conscience gradually, line upon line, a little bit at a time, as the conscience was able to bear it; *e.g.* He had to impress upon the conscience of the Israelites the great truth that gross wickedness will always be punished, that deliberate violation of law will always be avenged, "Go and destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, slay both man and woman, infant and suckling."

Now, judged by our moral standard, this would not be right; we could not conscientiously do it, because we have learnt the value of the individual life. The Israelites were to learn this later on, meanwhile the wholesale destruction of a people *would not be* repugnant to their conscience, and, therefore, not be immoral, and would impress very forcibly upon them the lesson God wanted them to learn, bit by bit, here a little and there a little, the certain and terrible punishment of national degradation and sin.

Assuming these things—

(a) That God has a gracious purpose for humanity in view;

(b) That the conscience of man cannot be coerced, it can only be educated, guided;

(c) That those whom He selected as the agents through whom His Will was to be carried out were at

first on a lower moral level ; the inference is unavoidable that God must either leave them alone or educate them gradually, as we educate children and savages now. (Illustration, sculptor and block of marble.) Granted that the morality of the New Testament is perfect, then the morality of the Old Testament must be less perfect, and the conduct of many of even its inspired characters relatively immoral.

(Compare Elijah calling down fire from heaven, and "Ye know not of what spirit ye are.")

To illustrate these principles take two or three difficulties.

I. Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac.

(a) Must be taken in connection with common practice of offering human sacrifice.

(b) Abraham, the great example of faith, *i.e.* faithfulness to the voice of God, the leading of the higher religion, surrenders home and country in obedience to it.

(c) He lived among the worshippers of Baal and Moloch, who were ready even to make their children pass through the fire as a proof of their desire to propitiate or please their gods. Hideous as such a practice was, it did at least represent a tremendous sacrifice and cost to the offerer.

(d) The thought comes into Abraham's mind, could he make such a sacrifice if called upon to do so ; could he offer up the son of the promise, and, if not, could his faith be as great as theirs, his sacrifice as perfect ? God wants to teach him two great lessons,

(i) the truth that lies at the heart of sacrifice, and (ii) the truth that human sacrifices are abhorrent to Him.

(e) The trial of Abraham comes to him in this way, he is not so far raised above the religious ideas of his age, as to be sure that such a command as he supposed himself to have received from God was immoral. It is a tremendous trial to his faith, yet he obeys, and so becomes the father of the faithful and the typical example of a surrendered will; but the issue teaches him, and teaches his descendants, that human sacrifices are not acceptable to God.

“The Divine interposition, not a moment too soon, not a moment too late, frees the truth of sacrifice from a fatal error, and sends the Hebrew race a great step onward towards the Gospel of mercy.”

II. *Jacob and the Blessing.*

(a) Certainly at first sight, and judged by a modern standpoint, the story of Jacob and Esau does present great difficulties, it does appear as if the Divine approval rested upon meanness and treachery, as if Jacob, recipient of blessing and heir of promise, contrasted unfavourably with Esau.

(b) A closer study shows clearly that Jacob, with all his grave faults, stand much higher than Esau in the scale of being, if you test the two by the principle that a man who exercises forethought and reflection, and who regulates his life by an aim worthy of a human being, is superior to one who is the creature of impulse and appetite.

Jacob, though far less amiable, was more moral. Granting him to be a very mean man, still he was a

man, while Esau was only a likeable animal. On this view Jacob was far better suited for God's purpose than Esau, he had the promise in him of better things ; Esau apparently had not.

(c) But how, you ask, could God have close relations with such a morally defective person as Jacob, such a relation as is implied in his being the elected heir of the promise ? Beware of Pharisaism. The purpose of God was one of grace, of mercy, of condescension. Such a question is emphatically answered by the New Testament. The God incarnate is the friend of sinners. " This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." There we see fearless contact with the morally culpable, on the part of a gracious Being Who had a higher end in view than merely to preserve His own holiness intact, even to make the sinful partakers of His holiness ; God took Jacob as He found him, and by a process of discipline and suffering, of trial and disappointment, transformed him from a Jacob, a supplanter, a deceiver, into Israel, a prince, a soldier of God.

III. *Exterminating Wars.*

Two things to consider : (i) The fact of the extermination of the Canaanites, the character of God. (ii) The agents in the extermination.

(i) The difficulties thrown back upon nature, pestilence, earthquake, air cleared, so moral evils punished.

(a) Such extermination being in strict accordance with the laws under which the government of the world is carried on, it makes no difference as far as

God's character is concerned whether the work is done by conscious or unconscious agents.

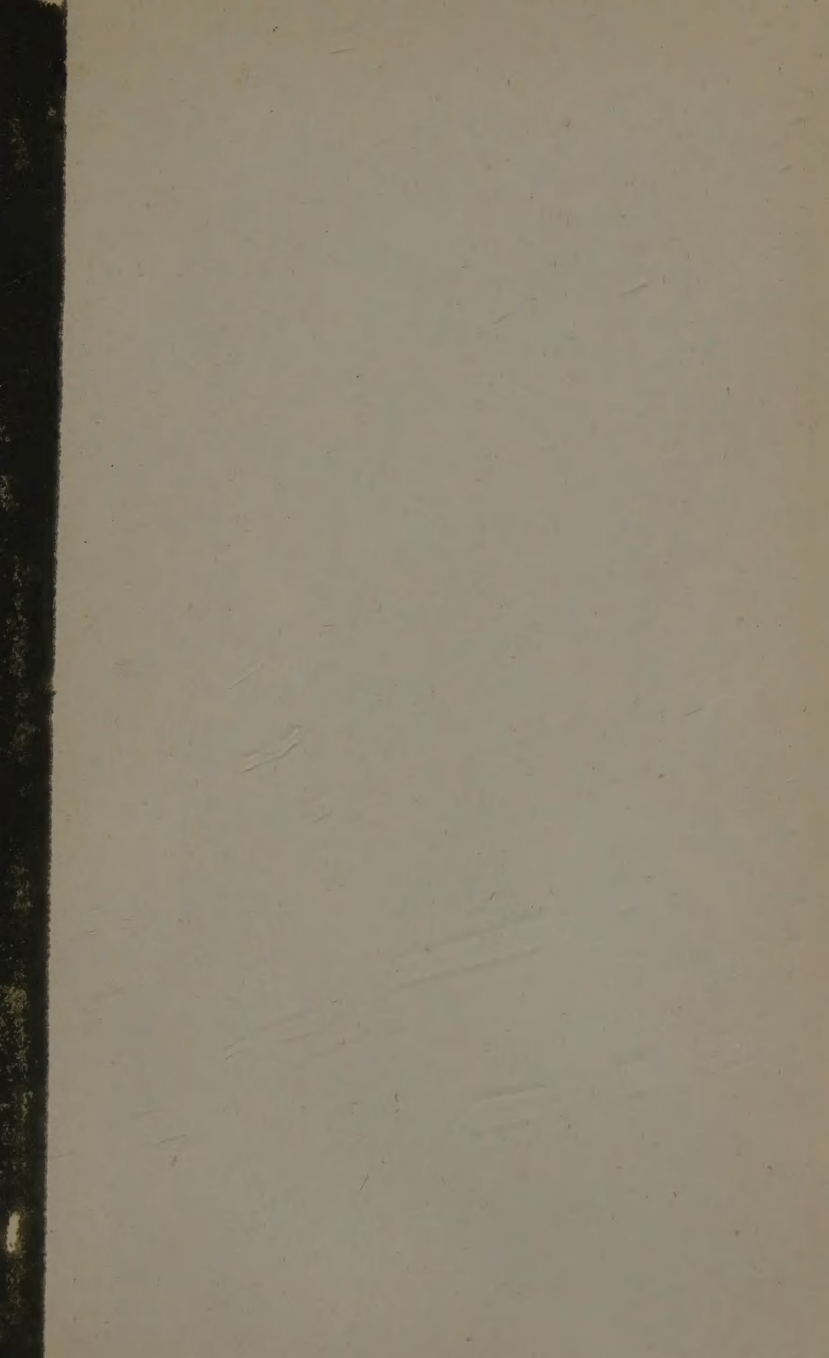
(ii) (a) The difficulty more concerned with the agents of the exterminations. How could they have regarded, as a Divine command, what is repugnant to the conscience from our standard?

(b) Did the Divine command run counter to the moral sense of Israelites? Did they think it wrong, as most certainly we should think it wrong? if not it was not wrong for them to do it.

(c) Quite certain, as we saw above, that the value of human life was very different then from now. The rights of the individual were not clearly recognized till very much later (see Ezekiel, Joshua, the sons of Korah). The rude ideas of justice common to the age, opposed no resistance from conscience to the Divine command.

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